

The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 14.06



I would like to congratulate you for becoming the 44th President of the United States of America. You inspire me to do many things. It gives me hope to become something I thought I couldn't be in life no matter what it is. *I believe in you, that you are going to make things right in this world.*

read the rest of Richard's POW on page 8

Welcome Beat editorial note readers! We have a host of solid writing in this 14.06 issue. Before you dive into this issue, lets devote a few minutes to our friend and long time colleague, Sheerly Avni, who not only has been an incredibly dedicated colleague the last ten years, but so courageously stepped up to write this editorial note...

Big love to all our readers, writers, first timers, poets preachers and teachers. It's Sheerly here, long time Alameda Country Workshop Facilitator, dropping in to wish you all a Happy Valentine's Day.

We've spent a lot of time talking about politics in workshops: Between all the crazy problems in the economy, the excitement of seeing a black man (AND first-generation American) defeat all odds and get elected president, and the horrors of the Oscar Grant killings, there's been so much happening out there that impacts you that we've been doing our best to hit all these topics, so other people in the country could hear what you had to say.

But this week, let's talk about love.

Beat writers produce some of the best love poems we've ever read - and they also tell some tragic stories. We've read about girls whose boyfriends died in their arms, about young men who love their girls so much that they raise the girls' children as their own, or young men whose hearts get broken because their girl moves on while they're locked up.... We've seen people get punked by love, get lifted by love, get broken by love, get made whole by love.

But then the question is, how do you know whether or not it's true love? What if it's just infatuation? Or lust? What if you think you love someone but he or she treats you bad, gets you putting in work, or cheats on you? On the flip side, what if you love someone, and you know you do, but you feel like most of the letters and poems you write always start with "I'm sorry for all the pain we put you through?"

Well damn, we sure don't have the answers, but these did seem like questions worth asking. So we found a quiz on the internet that's designed to help people figure out if they are truly in love, in a strong, powerful way that can help them conquer the world, and so we're reprinting it here, for you all to check out (we switched up the language and added a few questions on our own.)

TL in this case stands for True Love (What else?) Be sure to answer honestly - this is not court, this is about your life and your happiness, and no one needs to see your answers but you...

THE LOVE QUIZ

Answer Each Question with a T for True or an F for False

1. You know, because your TL told you so, that all your deep feelings are returned.
2. Your TL makes you feel special and good about yourself
3. If and when you feel jealous, it only lasts for a minute or to - you trust your TL not to betray you or hurt your relationship.
4. When you fight, you always make up quickly, say within a few hours, and you always agree that nothing is more important than being able to express your true feelings (even if it sometimes causes conflict)
5. Nothing makes you feel as peaceful as when you and your TL are together
6. Your TL NEVER tries to get you to choose between him/her and your family or friends. If you make that call, it's your decision, and yours alone
7. You don't need to test each other, to make them prove themselves to you
8. You can be the "real you" with this person.
9. If you are having sex nobody forced it on anybody, and no one is feeling any kind of pressure to not use protection.
10. You don't need to be afraid of physical violence from your TL

11. Your TL is trying to help you stay OUT of jail

12. Your TL would still love you tomorrow even if you were suddenly flat broke.

Now for scoring... if you answered TRUE to at least 9 out of the 12 questions, then there is a good chance you have found a deep and meaningful love that will last forever... (But if you answered FALSE on #10, then we gotta say, drop him or her NOW).

But if when you answered those questions, if you started to feel like you couldn't honestly answer TRUE to at least 9 of them, then it might be time to kick that ninja (ninjette?) to the curb.

Because at The Beat, when we read your pieces, we see and appreciate the best in you --- and this Valentine's Day, isn't it worth making sure you are getting and giving what you deserve????

Peace to all, and Happy Valentine's Day.

Thanks Sheerly! Lets get busy with sharing with you readers the topics that were discussed in our workshops prior to the writing that is featured in this latest issue.

The first topic, "Remaking America" - In Obama's inspiring inaugural speech, he mentioned, "For the world has changed, and we must change with it." "What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility- a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nations, and the world, duties..." "Our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions - that time has surely passed." "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin again the work of remaking America. For everywhere we look, there is work to be done..." Obama's spoke about "remaking America." What does that mean to you and your community?

Second topic, "Words" - The whole world relies on communication with words, through writing or speaking. The power of words is unbelievable, as in this excerpt from the Bible: "So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire...no one can tame the tongue; it is restless evil and full of a deadly poison." With that in mind, how have words affected you, for better or for worse. Think about some important interactions you have had, letters you have written, and share with us the power of words.

Three, "Violence: nature or nurture?" - In this week's inauguration of President Barack Obama, Senator Dianne Feinstein of California made reference to the non-violent protests that made the election of a black president possible. Do you think nonviolence, as modeled by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., can be more effective than violence? Digging deeper, where do you think violence comes from? Some of you are locked up for violent crimes, and many of you have committed violent acts. Do you think people are inherently violent (are born that way), or do you think good people resort to violence because of outside forces? Where do you think young people learn how, when, and why to be violent? Give us your history of violence from where you sit.

Last but not least, the very popular, "A letter to the president" - What would you like to say to the new president? (We'll send him your letters too.)

Ok this is the last reminder of our current writing contest, the question is... "Does President Obama inspire you?" How does he inspire you? Send Beat editor Omar Turcios your thoughts on how President Barack Obama inspires you, and the top three pieces, voted on by the lead Beat editors, will be given \$50 money orders. The deadline for accepting pieces is February 28, 2009. All the pieces will be featured in The Beat Within publication the first week of March, 2009.

All right friends, enjoy the powerful within this Beat. It is an honor to share with you all. This one goes out to Alex Rodriguez, yeah right! Ok, Michael Phelps, nahhhh.... All right, how 'bout to all the people who have a hand in raising money for The Beat Within. Their efforts mean the world and the future of this unique and very special weekly.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Last Day

Verse 1

It was a hot late night when I remember kicking back
Bumping the oldies out the homie Dopey's Cadillac
Parked on the block drinking pisto, selling dope
Me, my homie Joker, Darcy, my primo Locs
Watching out, keep an eye out for the black and white
Kicking back, spending days on a crazy-ass night
The block was rolling just like any other day
The only thing I didn't know — the homie was gonna get sprayed
Damn Loco, a ranfla (car) hit the block
Fools hanging out, the next thing I knew my homie was shot
Damn, he fell, it seemed it was all a dream
All I kept hearing was the homeboys scream
"Look ese, don't die," they kept saying
He tried to get up, but in the homie's arms he kept laying
I look around and see my homies everywhere
Faces looking down on him
He tried to talk to the homie but he couldn't even talk
"Please dear god, don't let this be his last day"
I seen him close his eyes and go in a deep daze
Chorus
Somebody please give me just a minute, I never knew that this would be my last day.

Verse 2

The juras came and they blocked the calles all up
All I kept hearing was the homie get shot
The medics worked on him, and the juras all around
Hitting up my homies all about what went down
He got rushed to the hospital, I guess to cut him up
Slowly he was dying, damn I know he is stuck
I hear the doctors running trying to save him
"There's nothing else to do," they said, "but wait and see"
Now he is stranded in a coma, on a life support machine
With his family around him, but no way to win
Mom starts crying, and his pops is holding tight
With tears in his eyes, telling him to fight
Everything went black, and he got cold as ice
When a big flash of light appeared before his eyes
It's a shame we die, for the game will never end
But now I know, now I understand...
Chorus
Somebody please give me just a minute, I never knew that this would be my last day

Verse 3

Now he is gone, but that's the way it all goes
He's laying in a casket in some gangster clothes
Homies walking up, to pay their last respects
With tears in their eyes, dressed up in all black
("I just got something in my eyes")
"Rest in Peace homeboy," is what we all say
Soon he'll be burned, he'll be on his way
From ashes to ashes and dust to dust
It's pay back time, and in my homeboys I trust
An eye for an eye, that's what it's all about
I know my 'hood'll get back 'cause he had much clout
I guess this is it, now it's time to ride
In the big black hearse, with chrome SS on the side
Bumper to bumper all the way down the street
Down to the cemetery, rolling deep
Heading down the east side on my way
I never thought I'd come to see his last day
(RIP to all the comrades that have left this world)

-Temper, Santa Clara

From The Beat: And now we've just got something in our eyes. Temper, Temper, Temper, how much pain you express in this ballad, this story that happens over and over — an eye for an eye — though seldom has anyone as gifted as you to turn the tragedy into art. But how will it end? Will you ever feel the pain that your homies' revenge will put into the broken heart of another mother, another father? Will you ever see what that revenge will bring to another of your beloved homies? An eye for an eye... Yes, RIP to ALL who have died way before their time, and for what? We want to cry!

Feeling Lonely

Day by day, it's more impossible to cope...
I feel like I'm the one that' doin dope
Can't keep a steady hand because I'm nervous
Every Sunday morning I'm in service
I know the lord is looking at me
But yet and still he's offered me to feel happy
I often drift when I drive
Having fatal thoughts of suicide
I bang and get it over with
But still I'm worried free, and that's bullshhhh
I got a little boy to look after
And if I die then my child will be a bastard
I had a woman who was down for me
But to me it seemed like she was down to get me
Now she's back with her mother
Now I'm realizing that I love her
Now I'm feeling lonely

-Dash, Fresno

From The Beat: That feeling of loneliness/ Can sweep over you and make you feel hopeless/ But life is more than a picture of today/ It's more than what you've done or what they say/ Your son needs a daddy, and you need him too/ Take that responsibility seriously, and your life can renew/ The past is the past, it cannot be undone/ But you can choose a future that let's you walk in the sun

Asking Me To Get Caught Up Again

Man, what's up, Beat? I'm hella mad. I been thinking about this for the longest. Everybody talking about when I come back from Colorado, I should be different. Basically, they're saying, sending me out there, they think I'm going to change. I mean, it's nothing. I do want to change. I'm ready to get my life right and do the right thing, feel me?

But at the same time, I'm thinking like this. Y'all taking me from the neck of the woods, sending me somewhere for a year, then putting me back into the neck of my woods, sending me somewhere for a year, then putting me back in the neck of my woods. I mean, to me it's no point of taking me from somewhere, then putting me back. You know that's basically asking for me to get caught up again, straight up, because how I was raised, it ain't all cookies an' cream.

I mean, basically, I take care of myself and I try to help my family out when I can. But trying to survive ain't no joke, straight up where I come from. That's how I ended up getting my first case, 'cause I'm trying to survive. So, basically, that shhh don't mean nothing. Even if I do go somewhere and come back, I'm still going to be me, but I'm be smarter and have more class in what I do, so I won't get caught up again. Not saying that I'm just going to go back to selling drugs. I mean I'm willing to change and I'm ready to change, so whatever y'all throw my way, best believe I'ma take advantage of everything.

Like big bra Darious and CJ said (RIP), everything I do, whether it's good or bad, I'm still a beast and a ninja. Can't knock me off my feet, ya dig, 'cause I'm out here. But, yeah, that's what I been tripping off.

-Queen Bri, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is a lot to admire in this thoughtful piece, QB. For one thing, we admire your desire to change, and your willingness to leave your "neck of the woods" to fortify yourself with new knowledge and experience for your future freedom. But we also admire your analysis of a system that would take the time and money to take you to a different environment only to drop you right back into the same old environment where it's like asking you to get caught up again. We hope that one of the things you'll take away from Colorado is a new sense of independence that will give you both the skills and the strength to take yourself out of the environment that conditioned you for this life. We don't want you to forget who you are or where you came from, but only to be able to live in a place that allows you to be who you are without risking your freedom or your life. When you get to Colorado, don't forget The Beat. We value the lessons you can provide.

"Wake Up Call"

As I sit here in the silence
 Watching as time pass
 Faces around me changin'
 While I stay stuck to the surfaces, trapped
 Until this water rises slowly
 And I drown in my own tears
 Reminisce on the good
 And bad days over the years
 Back in '92 I don't remember
 Really being born
 But my family always told me
 I was the cutest little boy
 As now I come to think
 Why did my mother up and leave me
 And my sister in the streets
 To grow up without a father
 And a lady who was flendin'
 If you love somebody
 Won't you keep them close by your side
 Instead of lettin' them go
 And have others take the toll on their life
 It's crazy how people tend to
 Say they actually care
 Until they strung out on drugs
 Then everything disappears

-Crazy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We don't know why children have to pay the price for their parents' failures, and such a huge price! Drug addiction can wipe out everything that went before it, like cancer. Both are diseases, so you have to have some compassion for those who have the sickness, even though this disease punishes the innocent. Now, you must be your own parent; you must find that "cutest little boy" still inside, and nurture him until he becomes the fine young man he was always destined to be.

Living In The Woods

My favorite place in the world today is to be in the woods with my best friends and my dog. In my life — especially within the last year — I have had many experiences in the woods. Some of the best memories are sitting by the camp fire in your sleeping bag with your arm around your dog, and a cigarette in the other hand; or when you wake up in the morning and find yourself staring straight up at the trees and fog cover, and you lie there smoking another cigarette trying to stay warm from the morning chill.

As you get up to start a fire, you hear your fellow brothers playing "Fire On the Mountain" on the guitar and mandolin. As the fire heats up, you begin to make coffee. After you have drank your sugared-down coffee, you find yourself venturing down deeper in the woods where all the rest of the kids are hanging out, hack-sackin' and playin' music.

I venture off with my dog to go get water. I turn around and look at everyone having a good time and enjoying themselves. I stand in amazement. I am finally proud of what my life has become. I get a tap on my shoulder from an old friend. He looks at me and says, "I know... I feel the same way."

If there's one thing I learned it's to never leave the woods. Only the bad things will be the outcome, thanks for the woods and that special family.

-Sage, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love this piece for at least three reasons: first, it takes us out of the mean city streets and the violence we are so accustomed to reading about in The Beat; second, it captures the wonders of camping so well, the fog-shrouded morning chill warmed by the "sugared-coffee"; and third, it is so well written! Where did you go camping? When will you be able to enjoy this again, and how will you keep yourself free to enjoy it over and over? Don't stop writing. You have a gift.

Who Am I

Who am I? I ask myself this question every day! I'm not the me that first came in here no more. I found who am I. I am Sunny C, son to my loving parents and a role model to my two lil' brothers.

I have high expectations and goals for me when I get out of here. I have high expectations to finish school and go to college. My goal is to major in criminal justice and become a social worker. I would like to become a social worker and works with kids, because I been through all of it, like getting locked up and catching cases from left to right.

I would like to talk to kids an' give them advice about things that they shouldn't do, so they don't end up like me. Some kids may not listen, but some will, and that's a good thing 'cause if they won't take my advice, they would learn from their mistakes. And if they do, they will be on the right track to a very bright future ahead of them.

Well, this is who I am and this is the real me, the real Sunny C! I've found who I really am.

-Sunny C, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for introducing the real Sunny C to The Beat. We are very happy to know the real you, because the real you has a lot of promise for a bright future, not just for yourself, but for those whose lives you touch. The most important lives to start touching, of course, are those two little brothers who need the model of an older brother doing what he would want them to do, and not doing what he would not want them to do. We feel the pride in your self-discovery (and we know your parents must also be feeling pride in you) and it is well-deserved. Do what you need to do now, and never again lose sight of the real you!

What's Learned, What's Earned

In this long, drawn-out journey, I've been issued some tough cards, but I've seen some raw things, some people have it pretty hard.

I don't disregard my problems, but, still, like the substance of a cure,

I see what others won't accept.

In circumstances where I'm sure, for instance, is where I seem to self-neglect.

Then I'm aware of my mistakes, but I can't keep myself in check.

Right now I bring things to the Lord, 'cause he's the one who rules the deck.

I may be co-dependant, preferring to choose the truth instead of lies,

the pain that's temporary leaves obvious remnants and stains my eyes

with this free-flowing liquid that tastes of salt.

I spit it, words of purpose to keep my sanity.

It wasn't taught to me exclusively, but neither was vanity.

Image deceives many, deception spreads and festers.

Ignorance becomes even harder to ignore.

I pay attention to the nonsense, but time won't wait.

I can't afford to look away from my own hurt.

The world moves forward and so do I.

It's feeling great, and to dwell here I can't afford.

I've learned my limits, memorized my boundaries,

and I know that things just may get worse.

But honest workers must give themselves a break and take just what they've earned.

-Purple Hayze, San Francisco

From The Beat: There are some fine sentiments in this fine rhyme! It's terrible to watch the world move forward without you, but it's "great" to be part of that forward movement, as you clearly are. No, you can't afford to dwell here, and the world can't afford for you to dwell here, either. We're too much in need of the knowledge you are spitting.

It's So Cold

(Verse 1)

Sometimes at night I can't seem to sleep (oh nooo)
 Starin' at the wall when I start to think (I think about)
 Seem like everybody know my name (they know my name)
 But they don't know me, they don't know a thang (no they don't)
 They don't understand and can't feel my pain (it hurts so bad)
 Lookin' for the summer, all I see is rain (and I feel like)
 Feelin' like most of my life is gone
 Ain't no peace in the streets and I can't go home
 (Chorus)

I don't know what to do
 Don't know what I'm goin' through
 But it's so cold, it's so cold
 And momma always told me to
 Keep my head up and I'll make it through
 But it's so cold, it's so cold

(Verse 2)

Mang, this game's insane, blood rushin' to my brain
 Sacrificed many thangs, enough to bring my momma pain
 But it's too hectic, I can't make it, I'm losin' control
 The rain is pourin' and pourin', the sun ain't shinin' no more

Now god bless my soul, it's trapped in a straightjacket
 I'm tryin' to break down the walls, but somethin' won't let it happen
 I'm in a war and it's real, my scars won't heal
 You don't know me, and I don't even know what I feel
 Now if I die tonight, momma please stay strong
 There ain't no peace in the streets and I can't go home
 So many soldiers in the 'hood gettin' hit from the blind
 Fell victim to the nine, left all their families behind
 Right now, every day, I feel it's my time
 The street flooded with fake things that be shooting with cold eyes

So I'm livin' life just to hold the rose
 Can somebody please tell me why this world is so cold?
 (Chorus)

(Verse 3)

It's so cold in this world I'm facin' and I ain't ready for it
 I'm breakin' down, facin' death, man I already know it
 Pops left when I was born, like I wasn't in his business
 Eighteen years later, he askin' for forgiveness
 Should I forget him, should I forgive him, should I give him a chance?

I don't know, I'm confused, 'cause I'm already a man
 And those eighteen years he missed is what he needed to see
 And a teen with a father is what he needed to be
 Every night before I sleep, there's tears rollin' down my cheeks

He could've taught me right from wrong and gave me the strength to believe

'Cause mommas too busy tryna feed us all
 So I blame you pops for never givin' a call
 I know your baby momma got inside your head
 And made you forget about me like I was already dead
 So if I die tonight, family, please stay strong
 There ain't no peace in the streets and I can't go home
 (Chorus)

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We don't know if this ballad goes with music or not, Saetern, but we hear it in our ears, (as we wipe away our tears...) This is how the dictionary defines "Ballad" — "a poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas. Traditional ballads are typically of unknown authorship, having been passed on orally from one generation to the next as part of the folk culture." The author of your wonderful ballad is well known to The Beat, however, which thanks you for it!

Violence Is...

I think that violence is both inherited and influenced. Violence is natural for some of us. In my instance I wasn't naturally born with violence flowing through my veins, but I was raised into a society and a situation that cast that shadow.

I think violence is caused by many things, such as influences and built up anger. Nowadays, young people learn their violence from society and entertainment. Over the generations, people are resorting to crime more and more and the image society has cast will blacken our youth's future.

I was raised into a situation where I felt I had no help and no way out, I never had my parents there to compass me through my adolescent days. I believe non-violence is a better and more useful way to protect and love life.

-Michael, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a very raw and real piece, Michael. Our environment really determines how we grow up and a lot of people don't realize this or they turn a blind eye towards it. Sometimes our parents aren't there to guide us in our life, it hurts but it's true. We need our parents there to help us with the decisions in our life that we are either too young or too immature to make but when they aren't there then what happens? We're forced to grow up too fast and make our own decisions and usually that doesn't end too well. What do you think can be done to set up a mentor system for kids and teens at home who aren't getting the parental guidance that they need?

The Beat Within

Violence And Material Madness

I think violence comes from people who has a bad life style. They don't get the good things in life and so they get angry, so they look to robbing and stealing. That's what gets them in here. So then, when they get in here, their whole life is starting to mess up. And when that happens, they're in the system. Then they get even more madder because they're missing out on a lot, so they get to more stealing.

Some people grow up with anger, and some are taught to be mad and act bad. Like some parents say, when somebody hits you, you supposed to hit them back. But sometimes that's not the right thing to do, so than they get in trouble for what they parents taught them. But when they get home, he or her mom says, "That a'right." So than they keep getting' in trouble.

But some violent stuff mostly come from material madness, so they try to steal and stealing ain't the right thing. You should just get a job, have some money in yo' pocket and that's go be you. And if that material thing is really expensive, so that's when you save up and get that thing for yourself, so than that's when you see you don't have to look to stealing. When you don't have to steal and you see that you don't have to do that no more.

-Speedy, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've done good job of explaining the cycle of anger and messing up, leading to more anger and more messing up. We really like the phrase, "material madness," because we think it has two meanings: the first is what you mean — getting so mad that you commit a crime to get something; but the second is "madness" meaning a kind of craziness, the "insanity" of doing things that really only hurt the person that's doing them. We like your advice, but what would you say to a young person who cannot find a job? And what would you say to the government about providing jobs for young people?

My True Friend!

"You may be disappointed if you fail, but you're doomed if you don't try!" I remember the first time I heard this. I was hangin' out with my bestie and we got to talking. I told her how I need to do this and how I need to do that. Finally she told me to shut up! Like those words blow my mind.

She told me the only way to be successful or the only way I was going to succeed was if I wanted to turn my life around. Anything I set my mind to I can do. She told me I can't dwell on the past, but live for the present, and hope for the future. How whenever I fail not to let it stop me but to keep going!

She gave me that quote and told me to think on it, and use it towards everyday life. If it weren't for her sittin' there and basically telling me how it is, then right now I probably wouldn't even be trying to get help. I would probably still be doing what I thought was right, and I would probably be having even more problems then I have now. So I just want her to know that I LOVE HER and that she's mine for life!

-Lil' Skittles, Solano

From The Beat: You are lucky to have such a good friend who also gives good advice! What is it that you would like to try? If you can be your best self, what does that look like to you, what are you doing?

I Ain't Feeling This

Man, what's good wit' y'all? I mean, I ain't feeling so good. Matter fact, I ain't feeling this jail shhh period. I'm just so tired of forcing myself to be calm in here around all these suckas. I ain't feeling this man, I ain't feeling this at all.

I ain't feeling this food I'm forcing myself to eat. Man, I ain't feeling this. Y'all just not hearing me, though. I can't even begin to explain how I am feeling — this waking up in a cold ice box cell, feet numb, having somebody tell me to take a shower and when to get out. Man, man I ain't feeling this!

Forcing myself to act like I find some joy in being in jail when knowing ain't shhh in here or nobody that can help me. I ain't feeling this — have somebody think they know my future and scaling me to statistics. Man, I ain't feeling this.

People telling me because I grew up this way, lived in a certain place and didn't have a certain somebody in my life, I'ma live a certain way. Man, I ain't feeling this.

At my window hoping somebody come visit me. Man, I ain't feeling this. My mom told me I can't do time and I went back to my cell and thought about it. I can't. No lie, I ain't no snitch or complain in jail. It just ain't for me. Man, I ain't feeling this. I ain't made to be locked up. It's just not me. I can't be me.

When I call my mom, I hang up mad because don't nothing change, specially because I'm in here. Don't mean I'ma get out and the world gone change, for it still gone be the same ol' shhh. I found out the only thing done change is me, man. Man, I gotta change, not wanna. Wanting to leaves too much room for failure. But man, I ain't feeling this.

-Shawni, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though you write that you can't begin to explain how you're feeling, you do much more than "begin." You take us with you. This is writing at its best! You've given us a lot to respond to in this piece, which is both sad and hopeful. For example, you may be tired of having to hold your tongue in here, but the fact that you can keep yourself calm (to avoid the consequences if you don't) should tell you what powers of self-control you possess, and how those powers can serve you on the outs as well as in here. There's only one thing we take issue with: you say that there's nobody in here that can help you. You're wrong... You are the one that can help you, and you're doing it!

Skip's Broadcast: Shady Relationships

Wha's up, Beat? That charismatic young dude Skip still hibernating behind the glass doors and sheet rock walls. But I'm alive, though, right? But anyhow, a certain thing that has been eatin' at me is my relationship — or anybody's, for that matter. I mean, bein' in here is one thing that enrages me, but reading these books and seeing these movies adds the stress, ya know?

I was watching this movie called "The Family That Preys" and that shhh was gettin' in a ninja's head. Call it insecure, but it got to me. Basically, ol' girl was married to dude, and I can tell she was a little nervous and skeptical about marrying bruh. But the fact is she married him, and now, four years later, she worked for a construction factory and her husband works as a constructor for the same company, while the wife almost the head honcho and shhh. But come to find out, wifey screwin' around with boss man, and that's how she got the top position. Her husband is just naïve and blind to the fact of what's going on. All the while, wifey tellin' him how he will never be like her boss, and some mo' shhh.

Now grown man part of me like, Leave this cheatin' woman alone," but the other side of me is like, "Slap the mess out of this broad!" So when bruh do find out about what's really goin' on (hearin' it from her mouth), he slapped the mucous out of her, and I gave dude a standin' ovation. (Now I know it sound cruel, but if you would've seen how much shhh he had to endure, you would have been ready to pull an Ike Turner, too).

But the point I'm gettin' at is this: it's ninjas in here with females on the outs that's doing the same shhh. No matter how good the ninja is to her before he got into this predicament, it's that loneliness factor. So she gon wait for a couple of weeks, maybe even a month, but six months down, some of her mess-ass friends gone get in her head, and like that, she's gone. She's gone. She's gone. It is a few solid ones that hold us down, but they are rare (like Mr. Clean with hair), but I salute them.

I'm in that same kind of situation right now. My sister introduced me to this girl while I was in here, and I been writin' her and callin' her, and all the shhh. We been good for about two months now (a ninja get lonely in this thang). So now I done got in her ear so much that she dropped the "L-word" on me. Sho' did, mm-hmm. All this over the phone, though, and me bein' the real ninja I am, I can't say this back to her. It gotta be a mutual feelin', and I'm diggin' lil' mama and all, but I can't say it!

She told me some things that no one knew, but that's according to her. How do I know it's true? She coulda made copies of this letter or had her speech down pat. I don't trust that well, ya dig, so me sayin' I love her, I would be lyin', and I can't do that to her or myself. It ain't in my nature, kinda like that Kanye song, "Keep that love (word) locked down." I can't be playin'. I'm a grown-ass ninja that gotta kid.

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know about justifying smacking anyone around for any reason, but the reality, is that it's far more likely the man is screwing around on the woman than the other way around. (How long would you be "faithful" to a girl who lets herself get taken by the system, leaving you behind?) Do you think that she should smack him around if that happens? Maybe — putting Tyler Perry aside for a minute — people your age should not tie themselves to one person, no matter how good that one person appears to be, because you are both growing in so many ways. Adolescence is a time of experimentation, of learning by doing (and by making mistakes). We admire you for refusing to lie to her, and we don't think "love" is the right word for her to use, either. But that's part of what it means to be young. We "love" your honesty!

My Favorite Day

My favorite day in my short life I've lived was when my daughter was born on 8-8-08. It was a painful and loving moment all in one. I grew a bigger respect and understanding for all females in the world.

Before I had my kid, I was immature and selfish. I went to parties all night, used drugs and hurt people. But now I've seen the effect that I have on my kid and the importance it is to be there for her.

This is my second time in here, and I've learned that I have to handle my business to provide for my family. My advice for future parents is to be there for your kid because when you see they respect you and look up to you, it will all be worth it.

-Nothin' But Time, San Francisco

From The Beat: Sometimes, a single event in our lives can change everything, force us to see things in an entirely different light and to make changes accordingly. It sounds to us like that is what happened to you when your daughter was born. If you are able to build on this new sense of responsibility, to keep the promise you're making to yourself here, then your daughter will be lucky to have you for a father, and you will be lucky to have her for a daughter. Too many young people think that making a baby is what makes you a father. You have seen what is truly required for that title.

The Power Of Words

Words are very powerful. I've said some things to people that hurt them. People I really care about, but now they're gone, and I can never take them back. I dwell on that every day.

Some say actions speak louder than words. I hope that is not true because I made some bad actions, but I hope my words can fix the things that my actions broke. I wish my words could fix my relationship with my ex-girlfriend. She was the first love of my young life and I messed that up. She really had love for me. She stuck with me through my first incarceration. I still love her and I'm going to do whatever it takes to get her back. I hope she hears me out so I can get her back.

-Fro, Fresno

From The Beat: We hope she hears you out too, Fro, because we can tell from what you've written that you are a rare and good man. Whether actions speak louder or not, words count, so choose yours very carefully and listen to hers just as carefully. If you cannot fix what's broken, you may be able to build it again. Good luck.

Dear President

First of all, congratulations on being the first African-American president. You really got a way on speaking. That means you're a really good speaker. I hope that you're ready to make a change in our nation because everybody is depending on you to do the right thing.

I'm really looking up to you to try to make everybody happy and try to be fair. This is history in making. Everyone is going to remember what happened on 1-20-09 and everybody is hoping it's a good thing. I have faith in you because I think that everybody deserves a chance even if we don't know them.

I hope that you start building more jobs and more schools instead of building more prisons. It's real negative to make more prisons than schools just because it's a bad feeling knowing that it's a set up for failure. Once again, good luck and I hope that you're successful in life and please try to make a better change then the last president.

-Chow-Main, Solano

From The Beat: We appreciate the positive ideas of this president as well, and share your high hopes. Already we see some change, in many people—feeling more positive about what might happen, feeling more willing to try to work together...so let's help him out however we can! Education reduces the recidivism rate (how often people return to prison)—so Better Schools for Everyone.

A Letter To The President

Dear Mr. Obama,

I think you should make certain things that keep young black men busy for the weekends, so we could stop killing ourselves. I also think that you should start building new colleges for people who cannot afford that type of money, so they could be something in life to take care of their family, and get the majority of the tax money every year.

I think there should be less education about African-American people and more about other cultures so people wouldn't have to feel down all the time by hearing the word "Nigger" a lot.

People who's getting abused in their family should be taken care of in a shelter that provides a little bit of discipline, so they could grow up and succeed in life, and keep innocent people out of the pen.

-Tae, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you should be an advisor to the new President! We love all of your suggestions. One thing, though, there are things that we can do ourselves that can help without waiting for the President — like not demeaning each other by using hateful words to describe each other, like the "N" word.

RIP Dead Homies

RIP dead homies y'all left me by myself sad and lonely some of ya'll was young and so it wasn't ya'll time to go. When we was younger we would think about growing old. I miss ya'll and I always will. Mentioning that ya'll gone but ya'll don't know how I feel.

I don't feel right saying ya'll gone off the map. I miss kicking with ya'll or in the studio doing a rap. I'm always going to keep ya'll name in my mouth. How them people killed you I'ma tell you that was foul. Ima have to forgive em cause they a child of Job. I'm not a sucka it's just I'm tired of seeing parents sob. On our part and theirs. It's 2009 I don't want to see no tears.

-Lil' Rolo, Alameda

From The Beat: We are sorry for your losses, and for the families who have lost your friends as well. You are strong to be able to forgive. Look to what is creative and has life, and leave the destruction alone.

Dear President

How are you Mr. President? I am writing from Santa Clara juvenile hall. My name is Richard. I am facing a life sentence for kidnapping, attempted murder, carjacking, and 2nd degree robbery. I am 17 years old.

I would like to congratulate you for becoming the 44th President of the United States of America. You inspire me to do many things. It gives me hope to become something I thought I couldn't be in life no matter what it is. I believe in you, that you are going to make things right in this world. I know when I go to prison I can try my hardest to get my education and other things. I didn't think I could at first, but with you as President, I have faith.

I know I am in here and might not get out soon, but I know you will be there for those on the outside of these walls. I know you will make a change. I hope the best for you, Mr. President. Thank you for reading this, and I apologize for taking your time.

-Richard, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We don't think you need to apologize for taking the President's time. In fact, we think he would be proud to know that his accomplishment has inspired you, and opened your eyes to the reality that you can accomplish many things in your own life, whether behind bars or not. Whether you know it or not, your own words can have the same effect on those who take the time to read what you've written and, like a pebble in a pond, the ripples of inspiration will continue to widen. Get your education, as you know you can, and use it to continue teaching!

To My Son

Every time my son comes to see me he looks sad, and he wonders why I'm not at home like the other dads. All I can say is "cause daddy made a bad choice." He says he's not, but I can tell he's mad from his voice. He starts saying "no" every time he gotta leave. I watch him cry, and wipe his own tears on his sleeve. He's only three but he understands a lot.

He knows the police brought me here, and that is why he hates the cops. I explain it's my fault, 'cause of what daddy did. It's my fault that he barely knows what a daddy is.

His mama tries the best she can but she's not a man. She can't teach him the same things I can.

Lil' dude just like me- we act the same. That's my Jr., he has my first and last name.

I missed his birthday this year up in juvie hall. I couldn't give him nothing but a collect phone call.

All I want to do is raise my son and live right. Selling crack ain't the only way to feed my kid. I'm gonna get a job and go back to school again. Play catch with him, sign him up for little league. Teach him manners, how to say thank you and please.

First thing I gotta do is get down on my knees, and pray to God that my son will forgive me.

-B, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a powerful and heartbreaking piece B. It must be incredibly hard to be away from your son, and see that he is missing you so much. Do you write to him while you are in here? Even if he can't understand the letters now, he will be able to read them when he's older, and will know how much you were thinking about him when you were locked up.

So Sick

Mayne, I'm so sick of tha shhh, all of it. Missing my loved ones, missing the streets, missing the 'hood. You know, I need some 'dro right 'bout now, to calm my nerves. I'm stressing 'bout this so-called help I'm goin' to receive from the city an' county of San Francisco. But in reality, this shhh don't do nothing but make me worse. I sit in tha halls for a minute, then I'm off to the next damn grouper. This shhh instill hatred in me deep down, an' I ain't know how to release it, besides smoking the 'dro. It's the only way I can be numb from the pain.

Gots two parents that the state say can't have me, and the Lord knows I don't deserve to be stuck wit' my corrupt-ass grandparents. I plan to knock out this year of day care in Sacramento, an' get back to the city. My pops get released, and hopefully can get yo' boy back.

Pray for me, those who love an' know me. I plan not to run, 'cause with the runnin', I'm doin' time to face my shhh an' get my freedom back for good. I'm done with this. I'm tired of bein' so sick.

Shout out to the special girl in my life. I'm countin' on yo' support through this, Baby. Stand by yo' real-ass ninja. Much love to those who have much love for...

-Lil' Unlucky, San Francisco

From The Beat: You know, if you keep the promise you make here not to run, to face what you have to face, and to get your freedom back for good, then you'll be able to change your name from Lil' Unlucky to Lil' Lucky. It sounds like you have turned one of the most important corners in life there is — from irresponsible childhood to responsible adulthood. You may have some falls along the way (we all do), but you are ready to stand up and keep moving forward each time, and that is a prescription for a better life. We hope you get reunited with your pops and that it all work for you.

Every time my son comes to see me he looks sad, and he wonders why I'm not at home like the other dads. All I can say is "cause daddy made a bad choice."

Skip's Broadcast: Remaking America

What's goin' on Beat? It's me, the paper eater. Ha ha. I'm grateful to be alive and well, seein' another day, ya feel me?

But yeah, a new president just got inaugurated into office, and he sayin' we gotta remake America. That's all fine and dandy, you know what I'm sayin', but notice that he said "we" not "I" — and that's going to be a difficult task because "we" gotta work together as a unit. It's not a feat that's capable of being accomplished by a sole individual, because if that was the case, I would've been attempted to make a change.

But, however, it is capable of being attempted.

Dr. Martin Luther King changed a lot of things in America like racism. But unfortunately, racism still exists to this day. So America was never remade. But in order to remake or country, we got to change ourselves. We been waitin' for a black president for so long, but now that we got one, we gotta change how we live, how we eat, how we treat each other and then America could be remade. America has the title, "The land of the free and home of the brave," but now I'm ready to leave America.

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've put your finger on it, Skip. Without change within ourselves, there can be no national change. Leadership like Obama's (or Dr. King's, or yours) can help to move things forward, but that's all they can do. The rest is up to all of us. By the way, we encourage you to leave America, but only so you get a perspective outside the country, experience other people and cultures, broaden your experiences. But we don't want you to leave permanently, because thinkers like you are exactly what the country needs!

Words Kill

You talk a lot of smack
But I don't think you know
All the anger and pain
That I refuse to show

I stand there and take it
Pretending to be strong
I hold in all my feelings
Even though I know it's wrong.

One day I snap
I can't take it anymore
I scam at you in anger
Bang! The gun falls to the floor

Suicide or murder?
Which happened tonight?
Which ever happened it doesn't matter
It still wasn't right

Words may not kill
But they might cause someone too
So make sure you watch what you say
Because next it may be you!

-Bumble B, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: Nice poem, and yes, each word spoken can have a different effect by the way the words are used. It's just sad that such violence has to be used by someone's words, whether they were used for good or bad intent.

Just Who I Am As Karmeisha

Chapter 1 - As I Know

Well let me start out by saying my mom is from the Bay Area , Oakland exactly. My dad is from Houston, Texas, which I still wonder why my ma wanted a country ninja to be her baby daddy.

I asked my ma how she met my daddy, and she said on BART. Also ,they had talked about having me. Though my mom had me on March 13, 1992. Which is Friday the Thirteenth. She said he thought she was going to die, since she lost a lot of blood once I was born. Ma though did not know that my dad had seven or eight kids which he never told her about. My auntie GG was the one who name me Karmeisha.

Chapter 2 - Almost Got Raped

As a kid growing up my grandma raised me. My ma used to always drop me off with my grandma and run the streets, smoke weed, and whatever else she needed to do.

I still think back to the time when I was five or six years old when my ma had dropped me, my brother, and sister off at her friend's house. My brother at this time was three or four years old, and my sister was a baby.

My brother's name was Larry and my sister's name was Kalisha. I guess my ma name her Kalisha because she wanted her name to be like mine, which I hate. Though they had the same daddy and he was from West Oakland to. His name was also Larry. Well, back to me. As I was saying my ma had left us at her friend's house.

Once she left Larry and me than had dinner. Her friend had a lot of kids in her house that night., so when it was time for bed me and my brother needed to share covers and sleep on the floor. There was like four other kids in the room. This boy was older than me. He lay in bed right next to me, and he kept trying to have sex with me and was feeling on all of my private parts.

I was afraid and said "If you don't stop my grandma will kill you."

He than said "It's okay if we do it, I do it all the time with my sister"

.My brother had said leave my sister alone while I was crying. He then slapped me. Then an adult came in the room and said "boy lay on the floor that's my bed. So I was happy no more torture.

Chapter 3 - The Truth When I Told Ma

My ma had finally picked us up. I was so happy to see her face, though I knew she would have been mad when I told her what happened last night.

I said "Ma, I need to tell you something."

She had responded by saying "what?"

I then told her that the boy kept on touching me and how I told him to stop. Also how he slapped me. My ma was very upset and was like "Why you did not tell me as soon as I came to pick y'all up?"

I just said "I don't know"

Ma then told me not to tell grandma, though I knew I was going to tell her. She said that we would go over to his house and she would tell his momma. As we got there she told his mom and she had just said she would whoop him.

Chapter 4 - Grandma and Grandpa Out

Since my ma lived in Oakland she needed to drop me off in Frisco. That is where my grandma stayed. We had moved from the 80's in East Oakland when I was five years old. My grandma used to love to go to Eastmont Mall to buy me cute hair stuff, so when I finally got to my grandma I took a bath. I called my grandma Momma, though, since she was

the one taking care of me, which my ma should of did. When I got out the tub though I told my momma what happened. She was mad and shocked at the same time.

I then knew she wasn't mad at me, but she was disgusted with my ma. She then told my grandpa. This is my step grandpa though he raised my ma and them when they were kids to. My grandma had three girls and one boy. My ma was the youngest he was now taking care of me. So since he had a car we went to General Hospital.

Chapter 5 - At The Hospital

When we arrived at the hospital my grandma had then explained to the nurse what happened. So then the nurse had examined my private area. Come to find out nothing was wrong with that area. Thank goodness. So that meant I still had my v-card. Though the nurse recommended I go through counseling, since what happened to me. So my grandma got all the information she needed.

Chapter 6 - Going To Court

After all of what happened my grandma decided to take my ma to court. So she could lose her parent guardian rights. My momma (Grandma) told the judge everything: how my ma is a unfit parent, smoke weed, and everything else the judge needed to know then my ma had lost her rights. She was then very mad and sad.

My ma had the rights to see me on the weekend and for me to be able to spend the night for a day or two. Though sometimes when we met up downtown Frisco waiting for my mama and grandpa she would never show up. Then I would be sad and cry. She would always say she did not have the money to get to Frisco or that my grandma said that I did not want to see her. Which was both lies.

Chapter 7 - Me In The 1st and 2nd Grade

Well I had went to John Muir Elementary School. My school was located in Fillmore on Webster Street located in Fillmore. On Webster Street which was the Western addition area. Though I have lived in Bayview, which was a very bad area. My favorite teacher was my kindergarten teacher Mr. Steve. He was gay I think, and I was one of his favorite students. People use to always bully on me and eat my food that my grandma had made me for lunch. I felt stupid because I could not talk like normal kids, also not that many people could not understand me. So I needed to go to speech therapy in the 1st and 2nd grade. Once I got better at talking than I was better at speaking and English was my favorite subject in school then.

Chapter 8 - My Best Friends and 5th grade

When I was in 5th grade I had two best friends. They names was Merry and Lynettne. I had met both of them in kindergarten. Lynette and I used to always go to the Golden Gate Park on the weekends. My grandpa used to take me there and her mom used to take her. My grandma never liked her mom. She thought she was a big time alcoholic that used to drink Olde English all the time. Me, Lynettne and Mary I used to talk on the phone all the time. They was the only people who could relate to me on stuff. Though one day me and Mary stopped being friends.

Coming Next Week: Chapter 9 - Ordering \$1,000 Dollars Worth Of Porn

-Karmeisha. Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you so much for sharing your incredible childhood memories with us. It's so sad that you had to be separated from your mom, but on the other hand, it seems like mentally she was almost a child herself. Her love for you was strong, but she just didn't know how to be that mom you needed. And your grandparents fought for you, but then (as Beat readers will see in later chapters, they didn't always know how to take care of you either.) Does knowing that you had the love - however imperfect - help you stay at peace with your family?

Don't know What To Do

Don't know what to do sometimes
 don't know what's real or true cant rely on no one
 not even your crew they can have you down
 and blue and don't know what to do.
 Things go down don't know where to turn
 it's so hot you can feel the burn
 it's so crazy like you seeing two hundred birds
 you can be in a serious situation have a violent
 confrontation
 go to jail and get put in a placement
 having family problems don't know how to solve em
 you just don't know what to do.

-Young Boobie, Alameda

From The Beat: We like this song Boobie, though you're singing the blues. Are you able to ever talk with anyone to try to sort some of this out? We have to say that your own voice is becoming really clear over time in your writing. You may need to listen to yourself for your answers.

Remaking America

What's happening Beat? I would just like to let y'all know I feel about the concept of "Remaking America." We can't just rely on my dog, Obama, to make everything happen for us. It's just not possible because us as blacks, whites, shhh, just Americans period are a team.

At this point Obama is just like the leading scorer, but we are still losing! So we people need to jump off the bench and help the man out so we can bring home the trophy. Barack Obama is taking the time out to help us, so why can't we put in a little overtime to help ourselves?

I have a lot more to say on this subject, but you just have to wait till next time to hear it.

-Dom, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love the sport's metaphor you use in this piece. You're so right. Unless we do our part (all of us) there's no way the country can win the game. We can't wait to read the "lot more" you have to say on this subject. You're a thinker!

My Tragic Life

When I was three, my adopted mom got killed. Three days later I walked in my dad's room and found him dead. I didn't know he was dead 'til I couldn't wake him up, so I went and got my adopted brother. He the one that told me he was dead. So I stayed with my adopted brother and got beat and raped for nine years.

When I was nine, I got jumped into a gang. When I was twelve, my brother and I was walking down the street, and some gang bangers shot my brother in the head and chest. He was only eleven. He fell back in my arms. I grabbed his gun and shot three of them. They said it was self-defense, so they only charged me on the gun charge.

I got pregnant when I was thirteen, had my son at fourteen, moved in with my baby daddy on September 7, '08. My son Ja'kevious Ja'Ray was murdered by two guys because my baby daddy did something hella stupid. Now I'm in here and my baby daddy in rehab. That's the story of a real G.

-Stacia, San Francisco

From The Beat: Whether you're a "real G" or not, this is a tragic story of a real little girl who didn't have a chance. There is no way you can sort through these traumas on your own and try to make some sense out of your life so that you can move beyond the dark past you have endured. We are honored that you trust The Beat with this sketch of your life, but we urge you — even beg you — to find professional help in the form of a psychologist, counselor, or childhood trauma specialist to work with so that the shadows of the past do not destroy your future. We want to cry when we read your words, but our tears cannot help you deal with what you are carrying around in your heart and soul, and neither can you gang. For that, you need far more than we (or they) can offer. If we can help you find that professional ear we hope you seek, we will.

Hell Of A Price To Live A Short Life

White boy say we gotta pay a price cause we aint livin right
 now tell me is that being elegant and polite?
 And they say we don't think before we strike
 But they sentence our black --- to 35 to life.
 Now say that aint a hell of a price, damn all I
 want to know are we living to live or are we living to die?
 In the end you still pay a price whether big or small
 we have to pay them all--like
 my dead brah Daryus said "we ball till we fall but life
 never get's put on pause cause one ninja want to die for
 a cause
 cause in the hood we got more statistics than major
 league baseball."

Bye got to pack and get ready to go to Aunt Rita's house tomorrow.

RIP Daryus Gone but not forgotten Killed by senseless violence

-Son of God, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope you keep writing to the Beat. Take care of yourself.

Growing Strong

Violence is from nurture. You live by, you die by. We are all like little seeds. If we plant ourselves in good soil, we'll grow healthy and strong. And if we plant ourselves in bad soil, we'll grow weak and immature.

-Steven, Fresno

From The Beat: What a powerful metaphor for growing up, and thinking about the environment we live in! It seems like the key here is to make sure we have plenty of good soil for all young people. What elements do you think make good soil?

Will You?

Will you ever do what you think is good?
 Will you ever see what good is?
 Will you ever get back that innocence you had as a child ?
 Will you ever go to the pen and remember The Beat Within
 Will you ever think the hall as day care
 Will you ever go to someone you hurt and say sorry
 Will you ever point a gun at a family member
 Will you ever ask why do you do the things you do >>
 Will you ever hate someone you really love ?
 Will you ever go to a grace of a friend and spend a night ?
 Will you ever go to sleep knowing you might die ?
 Will you ever go to jail and make a smile ?
 Will you ever go to your own house and sit there
 And wish you could go in but know you will get got?
 Will you ever sleep in a stolen car
 Will you ever have to see your grandma through glass
 Will you ever steal a bottle just to get drunk
 Will you ever hurt someone to let your anger out
 Will you ever be legit and be able to smile in 50's face
 Will you ever be able to hold your son or daughter up high
 Will you ever know you are loved by your family
 Will you ever be able to forgive your father for not being there
 Will you ever know how to say good bye
 Or will you remain the person you are?

-Big Hungry, Alameda

From The Beat: These questions all pierce the heart, and they make you think, and since we know they're really about you too, we hope you answer each of these questions one by one, in your heart or for The Beat! Either way, powerful and moving poem.

Violence

Who's up Beat? This the homeboy G writing from the max. Like always I want give my respect to the homeboys out there.

Well, I'm going to be writing about violence today. About violence, I do sometimes think that when you are not violent that things can turn out better. But it depends on the situation. Like sometimes actions speak louder than words. But that doesn't mean that you should do violent things. Sometimes things just go in that direction, though, and something violence happens.

I think that violence comes from people. Some people can't control their anger. Some were just raised and taught to be violent, or were raised in a bad neighborhood. To me violence comes from how you were raised or what you seen. So that's what you know and that's what you follow, or that's how you go about your problems. It comes from all the things that could have happened in your life, so it just builds up and you snap.

I have a lot of history in violence. I am locked up for a violent crime, facing life. I wish I could've took it in a different way, but I didn't. So I'm going to have to make the best of my situation. Well, until next time.

-Lil' G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think your analysis of why some people are violent is exactly right, and we're sorry that your models and conditioning growing up led you to the violence that brought you here. But there is hope, Lil' G, because if violence is learned, it can also be unlearned, and non-violent alternatives can be learned in its place. This requires a desire to learn other ways of approaching our problems, but others have done it, so we encourage you to explore those alternatives (from meditation to religion, from counting to ten before acting to taking deep breaths and relaxing).

Bad Influences

I first got with my lady at the age of 12. I'm 17 now, but I was always hanging out with her brother, who was 10 at the time.

Ever since then I have been like a big brother to him because he only had his sister (my girlfriend) to grow up with. He really looked up to me. He started dressing like me and acting like me. But damn, that wasn't a good outcome because I grew up as a gangbanger, straight from the streets of my city.

Now my lady's little brother walks the streets with a group of homies and flashes his "pano" hanging on his back side, just like me. I took him to kick it with my homies from the hood all the time, and he saw how we got down.

I also used to come to my girlfriend's house late at night, all beat up (either because I got jumped, or was in a fight) and he saw all that. Now he's a solid little homie, all because of me. He has been getting into some stuff, but he's never been arrested. He's also come home "jumped" too, and that ticked me off enough to retaliate on the enemy. But then that would only pump him up more. I wish I could have stopped him from banging, but it's too late. He's hard headed, like me.

-Sadly Influential, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It's not too late, for him, or for you. Clearly, you know it's wrong for him and wrong for you. If he still looks up to you, lead by example. Show him that there's another way. We know it will take courage. But all good things require effort, and courage, in one form or another. What do you think it takes for a single mom to get up everyday, take care of her kids, work, keep food on the table? For one thing, it takes a lot of love - for another, a lot of courage. We don't know what your family situation is like, but you surely know a lot of these courageous women. So there's a model for you. Be courageous. Say no to what's wrong. And in doing so, provide positive leadership for your girlfriend's brother. By the way, thanks for sharing your story. It must have taken at least a little bit of courage to acknowledge that you've been a bad influence on someone you care about. Now take that next step.

Words

I got some words I want to let out
But there's something holding me them down
And they just won't come out
So I say goodbye!
I'm going into this not knowing what I'll find
But I've decided to follow my heart and abandon my mind
And if there be pain I know that at least I give my all
And it is better to have love and lost than to not love at all
In the morning I may wake to smile or maybe to cry
But first to those of my past I must say goodbye

-Lavelle, San Francisco

From The Beat: Although you proclaim otherwise, it's clear that you have not abandoned your mind at all. It's still working in high gear. As for your heart, it is as evident in your words as the emotions they stir in us. Put these two wonderful gifts of birth — a big heart, a fine mind — to a new purpose that benefits both you and the world you inhabit.

Violencia En Mi Vida

Bueno, yo voy hablar sobre la violencia. Yo estoy aqui encerrado como todos por un crimen que yo hice la cual en estos momentos me arrepiento dias tras dias y noches tras noches.

Aparte de que perdi mi libertad, tambien perdi a mi familia que ahora en estos momentos los necesito mas que a la drogas. Por eso estoy aqui.

Yo no naci entre gente ratera pero creci entre golpes de mi mama, insultos de todos. Si pueden imaginarse que no pude aguantar más. Me sali de la casa a los dose años y desde esa edad empee a vivir en la violencia de Mexico. Dos años vivi en las calles porque a los catorse años llegué a este pais. Me trajo mi papa q quiero con todo el corazón. Bueno no les cuento toda mi vida para tener más tarde que contarles. ¡Hasta la vista!

From The Beat: Nos encataria saber lo demás de tu vida. Sentimos mucho que tu vida haya sido tan difícil desde temprana edad. Sabemos lo que ha de haber sido de tu vida, vivir sin tus padres, y ser victima de la violencia en tu hogar hasta vivir en la cárcel. Queremos que sepas que todos, en un punto de la vida, pasamos por etapas bien duras que nos nos enseñan mucho y nos ayudan a ser más maduros. Ahora ya no eres un niño, tienes el apoyo de tu padre y no hay excusa para que sigas viviendo una vida que ya no te pertenece. Vive una nueva vida y no repitas la vida de México.

Violence In my Life

Well, I want to write about violence. I am locked up like everybody is for a crime I committed. which I regret it day-by-day and night-by-night.

Besides losing my freedom, I also lost my family who I need more than drugs at this moment. And that's why I am here.

I wasn't born between bad people, but I was raised in a world of beating from my mother and insults from many. You can imagine that I couldn't take it anymore.

I ran away from my house when I was 12 years old and since that age I started to live my life in more violence in Mexico. I lived on the streets for two years because I came here when I was a young teen. My dad brought me here and I love him with all my heart.

Well, I'm not gong to share more of my life so I have something else to share later. Until soon!

-Chino, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We would love to know more about you. We are sorry that your life has been so hard ever since a very young age. We can't imagine how hard your life has been without a father, being a victim or the violence in your home and ending up in here. We want you to know that we all, in some time in our lives, go through hard phases that teach us a lot and help us become more mature. You're not a kid anymore, you have the support of your father and there is not more excuses for you to continue living a life that no longer belong to you. Live a new life and don't repeat the same story.

Barack Obama

First, I would like to congratulate you on being President of the United States of America. Finally we have someone with a good head on their shoulders that I have trust in. And for that I know you will put at least an effort in pursuing my request...

I would like to put your attention that I am a minor that feels like I need more rights. For I am currently in Juvenile hall for something I was not even tried for, therefore I had no time to defend myself. I think that if they are going to punish us like adults, then we should also have rights like adults. I'm going to be 18 in a month.

That means I will no longer be a minor, but I want to help our country as well. As you know the children are the future so why not treat them fair. Thank you.

-Elena, Alameda

From The Beat: You make a really good point about minor's rights in the justice system. There is a lot going on in the Supreme Court right now about what is constitutional when it comes to sentencing for minors. Standing up and fighting for your rights is so important. Just remember to do it within the system, or else your point will never get across.

Word

Since I been here, I been reading lots of books. One book I read made me think about my little brother. In the book the older brother was kickin' it, and the little brother always followed his older brother because he wanted to be just like him. But once that his little brother followed his older brother, there was a shooting and his little brother got shot in his head. The older brother was sayin' to himself if he wasn't on the street, that would never happen.

That made me think when I get out I'm planning to change so something like they wont happen to my little brother. That's my plan and I don't care what people think. I'm doing this for my lil' brother.

-Alex, San Francisco

From The Beat: There are at least two reasons we think this is a fine piece of writing and of thinking, Alex. The first is that it reminds us that words matter; they can change a heart and change a life — both the words you read and the words you write. But the second reason is that you have seen what it means to really love someone the way a parent loves a child — to sacrifice things you might want to do for the person you love. We always say, think about what you would want your younger brother or sister to do or not to do, and let that guide your own actions, because they will surely follow your lead. We're proud of you!

Words

What words can do.

Words are very important in a day to day basis.

Words express how we feel and what we do.

Words are what make the world go around.

Words make people feel emotions,

make decisions and be confused.

Words have made me make decisions.

I have made good decisions

based on someone's words, and also bad decisions.

When people give me inspiring words I can do well.

If I receive bad peer pressure I'll do bad.

You either make more good decisions or bad decisions

depending on what kind of people your hanging around.

Making decisions also depends on how you feel.

Feeling a certain way causes different reactions for different people.

-Jesus, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: Word, are, a very powerful tool Jesus, and yes they can make people do things one way or the other. It all depends on how people interpret the words that have been spoken. Never assume that someone said one thing when they meant another.

Shot

I remember when the time I was shot I remember it just like it was yesterday. I was walking down the street coming from school and this black van pulled up and started shootin'. I tried to run. A 22. Automatic hit me in the side I fell and played like I was dead but blood was leakin from my side.

As I played dead they skirted off leaving black smoke. I thought I was paralyzed but my cousin came and helped me to my feet, put me in his car, and took me to the hospital. They put me in the emergency, as soon as I got there.

-Lil' D, Alameda

From The Beat: Lil D, this sounds like a very frightening experience. It's effective to talk about events like that. Writing about them is especially helpful for figuring out how you feel about such experiences and where you want to take your life. Did this event change your opinion on violence? What do you think about the prominent amount of violence that takes place in our city's streets? Try and answer these questions in reference to your own personal experience. You must be a really strong person, so, we want to hear more about you and your opinions.

Man, Son

(Verse 1)

Man, son, I really miss you.

It's a vicious game. One shot.

It took a lot and it left pain.

I wonder - was it your mother, or was it me to blame while I was chasing the streets' fame.

You wanted to change.

Is there a lesson here I am supposed to chase?

I got too much stress on my chest.

I hope that I can make it.

My son is gone. I can't embrace him.

Memories of you running round the house, naked, looking in the mirror, seeing you, you seeing me.

You had a part of my humor and my personality.

A splitting image of daddy - a little young me acting silly and laughing.

Things were always funny to you my baby boy.

You got me stressing.

I'm wondering if I should take my own life with a Smith and Wesson.

My little boy - you got me guessing.

I know you're sending unconditional love above for me in heaven.

(Chorus)

I guess this was a lesson for me,

but dear God why did you have to take my good from me?

I reminisce upon his love, giving daddy a hug.

Now don't forget - you'll always be a son of a thug.

(Verse 2)

My life was always messed up. The streets took my father.

Had no one to set the example, no one to follow.

Then my mission was strictly about chasing a dollar,

gripping a Henny bottle, looking for a female to holla'.

There's only one way out, and that's if you make it in.

I got no doubts about seeing my seed again.

Concrete, little boy much more than a friend, teary-eyed, asking God why did his life have to end.

Feeling hopeless. I'm hopeful my hands delivered the message,

but my heart wrote it. The sun shines,

so I guess it's a sign to cope with it.

Past times - they never fade away.

Now there's a lot on my mind.

I got to say my only option now is to wait and pray

so I can live my life in such a way.

(Chorus 2x)

-A son, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sharp writing, clever rhymes, serious subjects. What's the melody, Mr. Anonymous? Will we get to hear you sing it? Or have you yet to write the melody to these well crafted lyrics?

My Life - Our Life

What's up Beat, Right now I don't really wanna write on these topics, but don't get me wrong they are great topics.

I'm gonna write about me almost being finished with this program. I've been locked up for about five months. My release date is in March as of right now. I'm turning a phase three this weekend so I'll start going home every weekend. That's something that I'm looking forward to.

After this I'm not ever coming back to jail to sleep to no toilet. It's a possibility that I may come back to counsel or run some programs but not to stay.

Being In here isn't really a bad thing in a way. Especially new foundations I've learned a lot of life lessons being in here but it has also made me miss out on the beauty of life.

People, especially my generation are moving too fast. They are in a big hurry to be grown and they think that money is everything. They are even too busy to "sit back and smell the roses."

But everybody develops at a different rate of speed so hopefully they learn as soon as I did, or hopefully before I did. LoL It took me seven times and almost a year and a half to learn. Well that's that for now.

-Poohda, Solano

From The Beat: Your thinking is good, and we hope the lessons you've learned stick! Thanks for all your participation with the Beat, and good luck—enjoy the beauty of life, the roses, cactus, and all.

Dear President

You don't know me at all, but I know a little about you. I've paid attention to you the most I can, I've seen the movie about you that helped me learn about you and I read about you. My name is Marcus and I'm in California.

In December 2008 I feel I made the biggest mistake in my life that ended me in jail for the third time and this time in going to camp for 6 months. All I'm trying to get at is you been talking about change & so have I. That's what we have in common.

I'm trying so hard to change my life around just like you are the U.S.A. I would write you more and let you know wassup but I know you will never get this letter anyway. But can I say that I will pray every night that we both accomplish our goals.

PS. I know you will be busy for the next four years, but if you write me back in anyway, expect a relationship between us you will never forget. I have a lot to talk about.

-Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: We think President Obama would benefit from having this written relationship with you, we are sure he could learn from what you have to say. Write it out no matter what—say it and who knows who will hear it. Listen to your self on your journey to turn your life around.

Remaking America

Remaking America means in my opinion to change our perspective on domestic and foreign policies, and to also have faith in your country, to do what's right for our country and world. And also, for citizens to get involved in things that they feel need to be changed, by getting involved in your community, local government or any other means that betters this country or world.

-Swoofy D, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a wonderful statement of principle. All that it needs to turn it into a Piece Of the Week is some examples of the kinds of things you want to get involved in to make things better. Were you doing some of these things before you came here? Do you want to do some of these things when you touch down? Like what?

Skip's Broadcast: Words

Man, this my topic. Man, what's up Beat?

The tongue can be deadlier than the tongue at times. You gotta watch what you say and be careful whose toes you step on because they may be connected to the ass you kiss tomorrow, ya dig. But words can reach yo' mind and heart. Like my girl; she got to me. I asked her why she love me. She told me I make her secure, even when I'm in here. I ain't gotta be free to make her smile. That made my day. Just her words touched me in a way that actions can't, ya know.

But words can smack you in the face, too. I done seen people get killed because of what they say so yeah, like Wayne say, take them shoes off ya teeth and stop running ya mouth.

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: (You wrote — and we printed — "the tongue can be mightier than the tongue at times!" Is this what you meant to write, or did you mean to write the tongue can be mightier than the sword at times?) Words are, indeed, powerful, and, like you wrote, they have the power to raise you up or crush you. We're glad your girl feels like that about you, and we hope you are able to continue to make her smile when the real work or relationships starts, which is when you are together.

Hard Life

What's up Beat? Just writing this letter. Tomorrow I have court. Hopefully, tomorrow goes great at least. Everyone has doubts on me just because my case is so-called serious. But I used to put in work for the gang, but now I changed my life around. But what I hate is that nobody thinks that I did it... honestly.

If I never been here, I would never change my ways. But anyway, the only good part about being here is that I got a new life. Also, I can work towards my future. When I grow up, I wanna be a wrestler, but everyone says nah. But you have faith and always prove 'em wrong.

I know I'm ready to come out. They just gotta see it. Also, every minor and staff still act little I didn't, and I hate that. I used to be a psychopath killa, but I can understand. It's hard to believe. Just nobody knows us, only our self. Everyone calls me "Slowski" just because I'm last doin' everything, but if they really know me, I ain't. I just be slow on purpose because, why work fast? Ain't going nowhere. Nothing's gonna happen, just the same ya know.

Some people don't believe I was a psychopath because they see how I act now, but I got my reasons. I did let Christ in my life and I am working towards my future. Now just ready to go back home to my loved ones. Already I did change and I want to change. Everyone just has to see it. Just gotta keep pushin', gotta keep movin'. Never give up, always have your head up and work toward your dream. Look at Martin Luther King and Obama! Wow, big changes, huh?

See ya later Beat. Just have faith. You're gonna get out. follow your dream.... I just always say to myself why did I have to learn this way? Maybe god knows that being in here is the only way I could change my ways. I don't really know why, but I did change my ways.

Also, they have no right charging any teen as an adult because we're young men, not young adults right?

-Moe Joe, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Some people never come to see what you have come to see — that change is not only possible but necessary, so it doesn't matter how you came to see it. The good thing is that you do see it and as you act it, others will see it, too. We agree that it's not right to treat juveniles like they treat adults in the criminal justice system, but unfortunately, they do "have the right" because that's how they defined the law. So, just don't do anything that gives them the power to judge you at all, and you'll be all right.

Mom's Cancer is Worse

Last time I was here I told y'all about my mom and her cancer condition.

Well it's worse now, because my sister is causing drama in the household. She blames my mom for stuff she didn't do, and then on a school day while moms at work moves all her stuff to my grandparents house.

It's stressing my mom out and making her sicker. I'm scared that I'm going to lose her while I am in here and I don't want that to happen. Like two year ago right before me and my mom moved to Texas my sister and brother were living with my mom, me with dad. My mom decided to let me back into the household and they left (my brother and sister) I stayedwhich saved my mom from killing herself. Knowing I still cared, saved her.

-Haley, Alameda

From The Beat: We never knew about that early time with your mom - and man, that must have been a heavy thing, knowing that you were responsible for saving your mom's life (usually it's the other way around: The parents do the heavy lifting so the kids can stay kids and not worry). We hope your mom gets better - but we also hope you don't blame yourself (or your sister) for her health problems.

Becoming A Man

Beat, man I got to be real. I'm not feeling these topics. But I got to say some things about what's been on my mind.

Well, I really don't know where to start, so I guess I will start on the thought about my family. I been trying to be strong for them. Also I look at how I hurt them. If I could go back to the day I started to hurt them, from the day I got locked up and the pain I put them through, I would go back in time in a heartbeat. I been through it all, and I noticed the things I put my family through, plus I used to feel like a punk because if I was a man about things, I would've been there for my family and gave them a helping hand. So I realized a lot by being here and opened my eyes. So I'm ready for a change and to be a real family member, not just the type to come and go. I'm ready to step up to the home plate and be the man of the house since I'm the only guy in the household, and the only son.

Well, about the next thought, I been thinking about my case. But I really be thinking about my wife. I wish I could've thought about what I was doing and not have been selfish. Also, I did my crime on our anniversary. Man, Love, forgive me. I realized my wrongdoings. Also I been thinking about my future life with my wife. It's been hard to know our situations that we are both in, but I'm going to be strong and hold it together.

Well, I'm locked down in this max unit, but last and not least, I have my thoughts of being a success in the life I lead. I'm a victim to the system and streets, but that's not going to stop me. I got goals and they're going to be completed. That's a promise to myself and my wife. Plus my family.

One love, one life to all. God bless and love you, Precious. Also to the people who think life's a game, take it serious and think twice about the family and loved ones. Be the one to make it in life, not the ones to be saying I could've did this and that.

Well to all, stay solid and be strong... Gone.

-Peanutt, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're sorry it took losing your freedom to give you the time and opportunity to think about how your actions affect the ones you love, and why being an adult requires some sacrifices. But some people never give up their selfish ways, so it encouraging to us to know that you now understand what you owe to those that have stood by you, and that you take those responsibilities seriously. You have graduated from childhood to adulthood. Congratulations!

Dear President

Hey, what's up? I'm writing a letter to you just to hear me out. I'm in juvi, but believe me, I did and I wanna change. I lived 15 years a hard life, so I have my excuse. Check it out.

When I'm 18, I wanna join the World Wrestling Entertainment, WWE. But I wanna spend time with my loved one before I bounce. Everyone deserves a second chance in life, and I only used one.

I promise you, I will never come back here again. Just understand what I've been through. Call my sister; she lives with my mom. They know I changed. They know I'm ready. They just have to see god's child and not a criminal. I'm now a Christian. So I beg of you help me out and understand.

I've changed, so please check out my life and know I deserve a second chance. Please, I'm only 15. Please call my parent Monday-Friday at 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday anytime. Please trust me. I'm not a waste of time. We all have dreams and it's not in here. Thank you.

-Joseph, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a very heartfelt piece, Joseph, and we believe you when you say you have already changed and plan to change some more. But President Obama cannot help you, even if he took the time to call your sister or your parents. In our system of government, we are divided between state power and federal power. The President can intervene in federal prosecutions; he can pardon federal prisoners. But state prosecutions (like yours) are out of his hands. It's up to you to follow the new path you're on, even if there are some valleys you have to walk through before you begin climbing up again. Don't give up your dreams!

Every...

Everyday is another day kicked off of my sentencing.

Everyday I'm telling myself I'm innocent.

Everybody judge me but doesn't know me from a can of paint.

I'm a innocent black man so everybody need to get it straight.

Life is like a puzzle and everyone trying to solve it.

Like I said life's a puzzle but call it what you call it.

Everyday people telling me how my life should be.

I live a thug life but I don't know what direction it's in

and I don't feel like myself so what reflection I'm in.

-Young Arco, Alameda

From The Beat: Maybe you can use your time to get to know yourself better...listen to yourself and what you think about and find is really most important to you—until you feel like yourself no matter where you are. Each day closer to freedom.

Bring Peace To America

What's good? Y'all asking what "Remaking America" means to me. Remaking America means basically dying down the violence, including the war. Build more schools, affordable housing, jobs, is a part of remaking America. Basically fixing our cities and communities up and bringing us blacks together so we can stop going at each other's necks. Basically bringing back peace to the states.

A big thing to me about "Remaking America" is us as citizens, taking care of our responsibilities and not running from them, because in the end they still going to be there when it all boils down. So, yeah, that's what I think "Remaking America" is.

-Bri, San Francisco

From The Beat: The most important part of this prayer for a better America is recognizing that change for the better does not just come from leadership at the top, but from our own individual efforts at the bottom. We can tell that you are ready to make your contribution to "Remaking America."

Natural High

Diabolical is how my state of mind is defined
 Knotted and twisted, with no intent to unwind
 Inhale, exhale, tasting madness with no repeal
 Hypnotic temptation, like a black magic spell
 It hits the ultimate depths directly at the core
 Confirms the target and lets every last drop pour
 Just like an assassin out to settle the score
 Proceeding 'til that firm knock on diablo's door
 Mi mente's been turning ever since I was born
 Y mi corazon bled its way to a deathful torn
 Since a youngster by the paño mi alma sworn
 Striking like a sniper who never once cared to warn
 Addicted to violence, I'm the one who mocks the silence
 Simply walkin' with the dead, as if we formed an alliance
 Enemigas draped in fear is a melodic tune to my ears
 So I can't help but laugh at the fall of blood-washed tears
 I'm on a permanent trip held by a far-from-loose grip
 Hit and run, something slick, when them clowns steady slip
 Remorse isn't found, even if the darkest corner surrounds
 My pride is profound, even if embattled on rival grounds
 A silent alarm is bound to sound, signaling another round
 More madness is downed, bloodshed adding to the mound
 If the pinta should call my name, I'ma hold it down the same
 'Cause only a fool perceives gangbangan' as fun and games

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is really nothing "natural" about the high you celebrate in this poem. It's all learned behavior. Except for the pure chance of where you were brought up or who reared you, you could just as easily be celebrating the high your enemies feel about you! We know we cannot shake you from this mad love you have for the code that was handed to you (though the pinta is far from the only fearful outcome that could lie just ahead), but we can tell you this without fear of being wrong: however "hypnotic" and no matter having "no intent to unwind," even you cannot predict the future. There is only one certainty in life (besides death itself), and that is the certainty of change. Nothing remains the same. Count on it!

Misconception

I was born in this world declare D.O.A
 that god for the doctor that helped me see today
 I want to know how I'm suppose to live like this
 I never knew I could feel like this.
 Time is bad cause of the past but I got to make it
 I have to say thank God for every breath I've taken
 I love my Gramma, she was there when my mom was gone
 God made sure that I had her, I couldn't be alone
 she is wise and I know it she hold'n on strong
 I'm 17 years young, mature and my mind is grown
 it might be hard to see cause my poor decisions
 my whole life been hate my momma's love I'm missin'
 and the system thought they know me better than me
 but they don't think how I think see how I see
 a young man and I gotta develop my senses
 so many young people tryin' independence
 I'm held back by a rope its hard for me to breathe
 tryna find my own purpose who I'm suppose to be
 look in the mirrors and I see my reflection
 different mirrors different image with the same complexion
 why can't I be me!

-Tae Dump, Alameda

From The Beat: Keep writing and listen to yourself and what you have to say. Use your time to get to know yourself better, be clear about what's most important to you. Look for what reflects your inside.

Do Something Productive!

What's really good in the 'hood?
 Obama just moved in the White House and they made it truly understood
 They in there and I believe it's gone be for eight years
 We need to stand strong and unite as a nation 'cause we ain't going nowhere
 This day is historic and trust we're going to have many more
 We have come a long way and I'm truly proud to say I'm a strong black woman
 This place needs to get shut down and we need to help our people stay out of the mix
 It's ridiculous! We need to use our knowledge and start building
 Today is a beautiful, brand new day
 Black people, start acting like it! Get off the street!
 Do something productive! Ya understand me, maine?
 By speaking to y'all, I'm reflecting, so take in the truth
 Don't be blinded or fooled

-Kirstin, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's inspiring to read so many pieces by young black men and women (like you) who see that Obama's election as the first black president of this country is a call to change from the inside out. Wouldn't it be a miracle if he brings changes from the top, and y'all bring changes from the bottom? What wonderful advice you give: "Don't be blinded or fooled!"

I Been Really Thinking

I been really thinking while I been locked up
 I been really thinking like man this life sucks.
 I been really thinking while my social worker trying to play me
 I been really thinking my social worker is boosie
 I been really thinkin' do my ma love me
 I been really thinking that I'm going crazy
 I been really thinking when I gonna have a baby
 I been really thinking what the world is coming to
 I been really thinking that sometimes love ain't true and will hurt you
 I been really thinking about my life I been really thinking what I will sacrifice
 I been really thinking when I'm gonna die
 I been really thinking when I die who will even cry
 I been really thinking everyday.
 I been really thinking sometimes I got to cry
 Maybe I been really thinking about my future
 I been really thinking why people got to hurt I
 been really thinking everything
 I been really thinking that what I will say
 I been really thinking all my life
 I been really thinking I been really thinking I been really thinking.

-Karmeisha, Alameda

From The Beat: You're thinking about the mysteries of your own personal pain and situation, but you're also asking about the deeper mysteries: Why do people have to suffer? Why is that love is sometimes untrue? The Beat doesn't have the answers, but we join you in pondering the questions.

Believe

Barack Obama made history! He is strong. When John McCain was talking about his wife and kids, Obama kept his head up and played basketball with old friends around the country. He is also a leader by telling other races they can be what they want to be; just believe. He is an idol to kids. All he want kids to do is believe. I'm gone!

-Hunter, San Francisco

From The Beat: Is Barack an idol to you? What do you hope he can accomplish? What do you think he hopes you can accomplish?

Violence Comes From Violence

I think violence comes from people who have experienced violent acts that has happened towards their loved ones, or who has been taken away. And kids blame this world for what has happened, like if a family was to be taken into the afterlife, they take their anger onto people they dislike or get random people, so they can feel the same pain you're goin' through.

-Leave One, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree with your analysis, but wonder if there's a way out of it. If violence produces only more violence, then war produces war, the death penalty produces death, family violence produces more family violence, and street violence produces more street violence, is there any hope to change this picture? Any ideas?

A Letter To President Obama

If I had a chance to write a letter to president-elect Barack Obama, I would ask him to please stop the war. And I would ask him to please help the kids and families with food and shelter who needs it.

I would congratulate him for being the first black president. I'm not a racist person, but that's good because we finally have a black man running things for once. About fifty or sixty years ago, a black man or a white man couldn't even drink from the same water fountain. And on top of that, we couldn't even eat dinner together in the same restaurant.

-Jb, San Francisco

From The Beat: It is exciting to see the country mature enough to put race aside, at least enough to elect the best man to be President, regardless of his color. The "Jim Crow" laws you talk about (making separate drinking fountains for white and black, for example), were in the South, but prejudice against blacks has been part of every state's history. We also hope Obama ends the war and helps the poor.

In Reality

What's good with The Beat me chillin'
 I'm just getting tired of all the police killin'
 talking 'bout they scared
 in reality they should be prepared
 they killed my cousin shot him six times in his back
 that's messed up how they dropped him like that
 I'm tired of taking chances
 runnin' the streets mess around
 get knocked up get a life sentence
 I ain't tryin' to be like my Uncle Mark
 go to the pen and have to hurt somebody.

-Lil' Dre

From The Beat: You're right, you deserve a better fate than what you describe! Now take this gift for rhyming and tell us a version of your life story as you WANT it to end up.

Choices And Life

As you may know by now, we have all made some bad choices that we regret. Everything we do is a choice. Anger and violence is not an excuse, it is a choice. Yeah, I know life gets hard sometimes — not enough clothes, money, food. You know, some of the same things we teens go through in the ghetto,

I know you got that greasy dude that always got something to say out of pocket. Now just think before you start to smash, think he might like you... Choices then in his shoes. It's a loud-mouth girl, breath stanking and all, but think before you hurt her face. Think choices.

-Dorothy, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you see the choices you made that led the system to make its own choices (to put you here), what new choices do you see making when you touch down?

The Outs

I miss the outs and I miss my family too. I haven't been to my hometown in so long that I forgot what it's like out there. My mom won't come visit me so I don't see her at all. But I still see my dad. It feels like I'm tapped in the system and I can't get out.

I've been here eight times and ever since I started going to placements I've been coming back. My group home staff treated me wrong, so I left and I'm in trouble. I know the homies miss me but they can't come visit me.

So far I've been here for almost three months and I still have no idea where I'm going. My PO never comes to talk to me or my parents. It seems like my PO doesn't care at all. I've been waiting so long. I just want to get out!

When I go to my placement I'm going to work hard so I can get released because the sooner I get out the faster, I got to see my family and my homies. It feels like I'm getting struck down every time I call somebody and they don't pick up. That just pushes me farther away from the outs.

I know that my family is getting hurt by my actions, because they have to pay for all my actions since I'm still a juvenile. Hopefully I'll get out soon within a month.

-Froggy, Alameda

From The Beat: We really feel your pain in this piece, lockdown loneliness can break a person's heart. But you write so well, and it sounds as if you're gaining real wisdom in here. What specifically are you going to "work hard" at, to help you stay out of the system?

COLLEGE!

Dear Mr. Obama,

My name is Ericka. I am so happy you are our New President, because it has been very hard for us black people to go to certain college, and I want to go to Spellman and become a doctor.

I want to help kids with ADHD problems, because they need some one to really talk to instead of just dopping them up on a lot of medication that they really don't need.

And it's hard for us 4.0 students to get into certain colleges because we are either not good or we don't have the money to go there. A person who can play ball good can get a scholarship to go to a good college but a 4.0 can't. That's wrong but I hope you will change that soon thank you.

-Ericka, Alameda

From The Beat: Good point Ericka. College tuitions just keep rising and rising, and we hope that Obama can help fund scholarship programs while he is in office. As for helping people with ADHD - tell us more - what do YOU think of as a better alternative to drugs?

My Problems

So much anger up inside me, I'm startin not to care.
 Trust nobody because I'm in a negative state
 Mind so sick I just rob, kill, and hate
 Stuck in that mentality, all I know is the block
 How to chop down zips and bag them rocks
 How to get that money, cause this shhh don't stop
 How to duck the police when the block get hot
 How to stay away from the fake, and ride wit the real
 How to live in the hood and still stack a mill
 These just my problems, but I gotta stay cool
 Cause I'd rather die a beast, then live like a coward.

-Austin, Solano

From The Beat: These problems sound like a deadly trap and you might need that beast energy to overcome them. You call them problems, so we wonder if you can ride with the real part of yourself, using all your courage—what kind of life you could come up with.

Time For A Change

It's 2009 and its time for a change
I remember them days on the block
Pushin' cocaine
It ain't that I'ma bad kid
I just needed some money
being broke you a joke
And I ain't never been funny
The hall ain't coo it be drivin' me crazy
In my room can't sleep, thinking bout my baby
It's time for a change like Barack Obama
If it ain't for myself I'ma change for my mama.

-Lil' Fred, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope you keep this wonderful poem with you so you remember the promise you make in it forever! You write here that you did what you did because you needed money, so does that mean you are going to look for a job first thing?

An Ugly Day

Today was an ugly day. The reason why I say that is because I saw my mom limping . It hurt my heart to see my mom limp. I wish I could take the pain away from her and it can come to me.

I was happy to see and hug my mom for the first time in six-months. But to see that made me hurt inside. I pray and hope that God blesses and times her leg because it's terrible. I love you Mom. Pray, stretch, stay strong.

-Elton, Alameda

From The Beat: On the one hand, what you're saying hurts to read because yes, that must have been terrible to see. On the other hand, what shines through here is how deeply you love each other: Her because she came to see you, even with her hurt leg, and you because you took your mind off your own pain to worry about hers. That is what love is all about - caring for others. Peace.

Is This The Life I Want?

Is this the life I want to live?
To sit here wandering if I am going to see my kids?
Sticking up for other people,
Fighting for others,
This world is stupid for fighting over colors!
Blue and Red, and now black and white,
It's like they have OJ and we have Barack.
It gets crazier as days go by
But being in JJC time never flies
So now I am growing, because I'm not a kid,
And I am asking myself what kind of life I want to live.

-Terrance, Fresno

From The Beat: There are so many things we do not notice as children, things that seem ridiculous as we get older. We are glad that you see them now and want to know what you will do next.

Hard Questions for Obama

What makes you think you could stop the war that is going on right now in the middle east? America went to war because they wanted to find Saddam Hussein and kill him.

Now you guys have accomplished that. Besides Bin Laden who's the next person you want to go after that you think is a threat to the United States?

Now that you are the President are you going to make the jail system strict and have people do a lot of time? Or are you going to make sure the jail system gives kids and adults probation release and parole releases more often?

-Farhad, Alameda

From The Beat: We chose that title because you pull no punches - It's true. It's one thing to make promises, it's another to actually clean up the mess, both domestically and internationally. Do you have suggestions for what you think he SHOULD do?

Violence...

There is a lot of violence in this world
You get it if you're cold
Blooded on these streets but
It ain't the way to go
Go on with your life
Live it happy and be nice
Cause if you make one wrong movie
You might get 25 to life
Life isn't worth it
I bet violence hurts your heart
Because MY insides are hurtin'
So stop all this violence
Cause this ain't the place to be
Same thing everyday
I'd rather be with family
Just think of what I said
And keep violence out of your head
I'm not suicidal but I'd rather be dead...

-Tork, Fresno

From The Beat: Your poem is deep. It got us thinking about our own situations in life. Keep your head up. Once you get out, you can make a fresh start. Remember too that in order to get to a place where you feel happy, you first have to go through a bumpy road. Life is worth everything, and like you said, "go on with your life, live it happy and be nice."

I Wish Dr. King Could See His Dream

Us black folks been slaves since the 1500's.

In 2009 we got our first president. I wish Dr. King was here so he could see his dream, but I forgot he could he lookin' down on us right now. So Rest In Peace Dr. King, we all comin' together and we got a new black leader. Barack Obama.

I'm proud to be here in 2009, another day another shine my name is Spiderman and I'm proud to be black but most of all I'm proud to be alive.

-Spiderman, Alameda

From The Beat: Beautiful homage to Dr. King - and it's good that we remember all the people like Dr. King who paved the way for the election of a black president. You are the next generation to carry the torch. Tell us what you plan to do!

More Violence Because...

I think it's more violence than nonviolence because where we live people always want to show people that they aint no mark or no punk. So they always are trying to fight and buss people, it ain't going to ever change.

Violence is going to be around for a long time. Sometimes people are born violent but must of the time they're not born that way. It's just the people who raised them or the people who they grew up with that got them that way.

Living in Oakland everybody should know what violence is like, because we all lost most of our family and friends to violence for example: a good kid with good grades who is growing up in Oakland will hang around the wrong people one of his friends might give him a gun and tells him to buss somebody and most likely he will do it, so he wont feel like a punk. So say he does and kills someone, just 'cause his friend tells him to. That's another person gone because of violence.

-Young Leader, Alameda

From The Beat: It's definitely a problem that others can dangerously pressure people into doing things they don't want to. Your example of the "good kid" is really powerful. It's a perfect sample of how quickly peoples' lives can change. Also, you discuss the intense influence that friends have on friends. You say that it's never going to change, but do you think there's any way people can stand up to this pressure?

What Needs to Change

The government is slowly dismantling the constitution.

People don't see how it's happening but it is, and that's what's going to need to change. They say that the FBI can issue a warrant and don't even need evidence, that's violating our civil rights.

The police on the streets are doing these illegal searches, shooting people for no reason, that's enough that needs to change.

Violence needs to end, people need to stop killing. The end.

-Lil' Al, Alameda

From The Beat: A lot of human rights have been bent or violated by the government in recent history. It seems that this is soon going to change with Obama as president - he's already taken measures to limit instances of abuse of power. But on the flip side of the government abusing their rights, people who rob or use violence towards the innocent are also abusing their rights. There are two sides to this battle.

Non Violence Speaks To Me

I think nonviolence is more effective because less people die or get injured. That would make a huge difference in the world. Everybody would stop dying.

Violence comes from anger, money and respect. Some people have anger problems which cause them to act violent. If someone wanted money they'll try to get it in a violent way. Or you could owe somebody money. People act violent just to seem cool or do it because they don't have nothing else to do. Young people learn how to be violent from hanging around in the wrong crowds or being in the wrong place.

I don't have a history of violence because I'm a caring person. I don't believe in violence. I learned that you can solve your problems without fighting.

-Kilunta, Alameda

From The Beat: We're glad you choose nonviolence. The more people that choose that path the better it is for everyone. What do you think you can do to spread this belief around? What can you say to people to convince them to give up the violence?

Damn!

What's crackin' Beat? Damn, they got your boy still up in the max, just postin' and waiting for court tomorrow. Hopefully they drop the fitness, so I can stay being in the juvenile system and just go to the Y and start my time.

Damn Beat, I was trippin' out the other day when I heard my boy P came up in here. I was just like damn these cops must've gotten all out on that case. But whatever! I just hope he plays it smart and just takes what he gets and does his time.

Damn, Beat I basically grew up in here. Now that I think about it ever since I was very young comin in, out, through this hell. It's kind of funny now that I think about it. I was in 8th grade and very young, I thought I was the shhh. No one could tell me what to do. I thought.

I felt I was on top of the world. Stealing cars is how my criminal career started. Damn, imagine that I didn't even know how to drive, could've died a good couple times, but I'm still here doin' my thang.

I remember the first time I heard those words "the youngest from the hood." It felt like I know anything and everything about anybody ha-ha.

Damn I wish I had someone to put me in check through out my life like an older brother or a constant father figure something.

Maybe someone would've taught me how to survive instead of learning the hard way, but sometimes the hard way is the best way to become wise.

Hopefully this court goes well tomorrow and I get sentenced to my number, and be out around 2012-2014 approximately if everything goes well for me, who is trying to maintain.

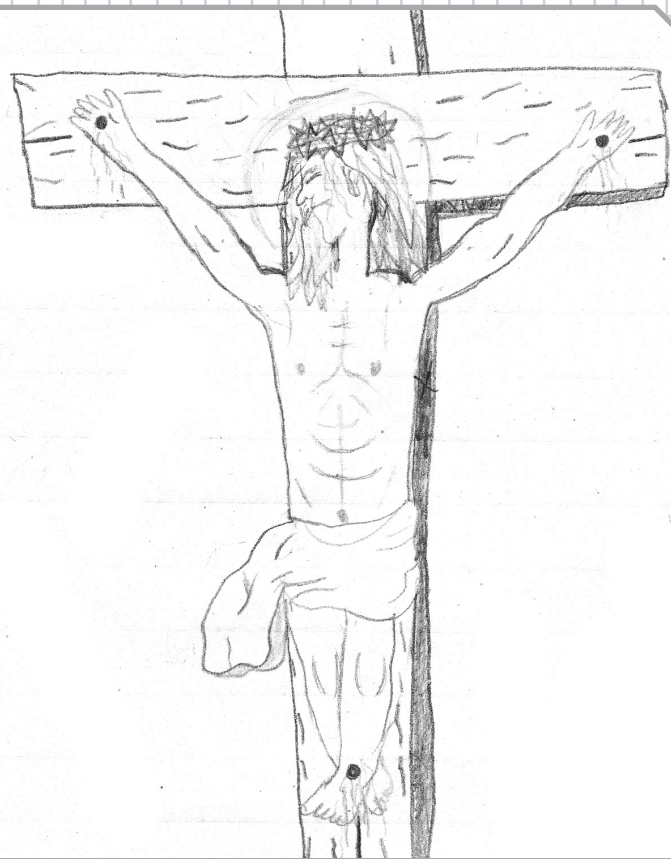
Well right now I'm just tryin'to get my mind and body right so whatever does happen I'll be ready.

Hopefully I don't get more than five years, so if I do get a 5 years, that means I'll probably have to do a 3 year minimum to be eligible for parole, but whatever happens I'm ready for it. Well I'm out...

Truly and respectfully

-Eagle, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well, whatever you did in the past, should stay in the past. Now, you're not "very young" anymore. You are facing something serious - possible adult time. And if we were you, we wouldn't be saying this as if it wasn't a thing. Your childhood was dumped away. Don't throw away what's left of you. Ok, you didn't have a positive guidance in your life, but what about now? You are wiser from your own experiences. You're not longer a kid, you are just a few steps away from becoming an adult, and possible in the court's eyes you are an adult! Damn, you should start acting like one! Life is only one. Once it's taken away, it's over. There is no coming back. Get it?



To Obama- Make Every Unit An Honor Unit

I think every unit in juvenile hall should have the same privileges as the honor unit. For example the honor unit can have cd players and get to have their own soap and own shampoo and their own food sometimes.

The other units in juvenile hall do not have the privileges that the honor unit has. The regular units have to use the Alameda county goods.

Also the honor unit has visiting for four days a week. And the others unit only has visiting 2 days a week. I think all the units should be equal.

-Chris

From The Beat: This is an important issue you are raising. The whole concept of "jail" is that it is a terrible place that no one would want to go to, and therefore, people change their ways so they don't have to come back. Do young people in the honors unit hate jail less than other inmates? What impact do these privileges have on the youth in here? We'd love you to write more on this topic....

Violence Is Life

My life is violent but violence is life,
 why you so quick to pick up the knife.
 You think you're a 'G'
 'cause your dickies sag and you locked up.
 They ain't no need to brag.
 ou think you're a badass 'cause you dropped out of
 school,
 but in reality that ain't even cool.
 You want to be an OG in which you thrive always.
 Packin' heat, to stay alive,
 Flyin' your colors
 tryin' to keep it real.
 Sooner or later you gonna get killed.
 Tip ya hat sideways, always stayin' true,
 you got black shoot'in black, white shoot'in white,
 we all in this position man.
 Think about the words I just said
 'cause your time is running out and soon you'll be dead.
 This is young Wedo and I'm telling you all the truth. You
 need to change your life before it's too late and it is only
 too late if you're dead, I'm out.

-Wedo, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: Good advice Wedo, but remember to follow your own advice when you get out. Keep in touch on how your doing when you get out.

Remaking America

It's all about change,
 it starts within the people,
 being of one mind frame.
 Peace on earth is what most people want to live with.
 Obama is president and is on the lure
 to bring together all nations lure to stop immigration.
 Lure to stop racism,
 to stop white and black 'cause deep down there's
 something we all lack.
 Lack to get along 'cause the color of our skin tone,
 all people have 226 bones and at some point everyone
 wants to be left alone.
 Obama is for change,
 white or black,
 we now have a president that doesn't lack,
 doesn't choose sides, America is now on the rise.

-Li'l Dizil, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really good piece - thanks for sharing with The Beat. You have a talent for writing phrases, now see if you can translate that into whole poems that really flow together.

Letter To The President

Dear Barack Obama

I feel like we can improve our United States. As a individual I feel like we shouldn't have to pay so much money to go to college. I think most of our hopes of going to college is lower by the cost of the school term. Some of the ways to improve it is to work down our cost.

I want to do something with my life but if I don't get a scholarship my chances are pretty much over. If I don't get all the money my chances are over.

Knowing that you are our president I want to consider lowering our cost for college. If you can help some people I want you to help me so I can do something with my life.
 Thank You

-Marqise, Alameda

From The Beat: We agree education should not be costly! Education should be free. You need to find an advisor who can help you find scholarships and assist you in the application and financial aid process.

Man...

Man, Beat, being free, no cell feels hella better than sitting in this cell, looking at a window you can't be in, plus a toilet and sink mixed with a mirror made of steel and a hard steel seat with a steel table thing.... four hooks and two vents and a eighteen-inch shelf!

What kind of shhh is this. I been through the old hall time and time again: Six times, and now I'm back in the new hall for my sixth time and I'm just starting to see this ain't cool. If I would have seen what I see now I would have never come back.

Now that I'm here it's like they're making it more like Rita. They got commissary! What the hell!! What does the government want to do, they want you to feel at home so you want to come back. Next there going to allow cell phones or something stupid like that ...man the system is twisted they all about money they don't want you to do good, they want you back and back and back until you hit Santa Rita or the pinta

-Big Hungry, Alameda

From The Beat: If that is what they want, then what are you going to do about it? Are you going to let yourself get caught up again, and become a victim of the system? Time to live up to your name: Bigger than the system, and Hungry for a better life. Peace.

Violence

Violence comes from a community that has a lot of gang members. Violence builds up a lot and keeps on going throughout the community. It starts by older people and passed down to the younger generation, and it keeps going.

We aren't born to be violent, but we live through it, and we keep on going through it. Maybe we are abused and we have to take control some way - and we just go through it and take charge.

Well, violence is everywhere and there is no stopping it. Maybe one day it'll happen.

-D, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks for this powerful piece. When you observe that violence is passed down from older people to younger people, maybe you've hit the key. What would happen if you didn't pass the violence on to those who are younger than you? You already seem to recognize that violence is not a good thing. That "one day" you mention in your last line might be up to you. Don't pass it on, D. And walk away from it in your own life. Talk with your friends about it. Your friends aren't the beasts that some adults imagine. They hurt. They bleed. They have emotions. Start a movement. The biggest movements start with one person, then a few, and finally, many.

Sitting in the Hall

Sitting in the hall

Looking at these four white walls

When I lay down I see my dreams

And see me delivering my new broh baby boy

Loving him and holding him

At the group home that my probation officer placed me

Staying clean off crack and being the young black queen

I can be

Going through my days with my head up high

If anybody wants to ask me questions about my life

I will answer you and I will not deny

How I feel down but I got back up fighting for my dreams and my goals

I know if I put my mind and heart to it

I know I will achieve

-Ella, Alameda

From The Beat: This is an inspiring piece, thanks for sharing with The Beat. You can be a great parent if you follow through on all that you write about. Don't lose sight of these goals and you'll come out on top.

Crazy Weather

At night, by the fire, the rain is heard beating against the window pain.
I'm all alone and going insane.
I can hear my heart hitting the inside of my chest, like a hammer.
I ask myself: why is this happening? What's the matter?
Alone, alone by the fire with nothing to do, but feeling tired.
The only thing keeping me calm is the relaxing sound of the winter wind, and tree branches snapping like bones.
Hmmm... weird, a crow standing outside, on the window sill.
I ask myself – is he going insane, staring at the fire with his beady black eyes.
The clock is ticking. Just a matter of time before he dies.
There's a storm in some human form.
Is it God making this weather, from heaven, on this day, December 7?

-Sammy, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Nifty writing Sammy. Those branches snapping like bones make us wince. And we're feeling bad for that old crow. But we're glad you've been struck with writing fever. May you never recover from such a healthy disease.



Dear Mr. President

I watched your inauguration on TV, the other day. You had had really good speeches. We even had a little function in here for your inauguration. And we don't really celebrate much here.

I really like your willing to help the juveniles and the juvenile system because I believe that we as teenagers still have long lives to live. When the system charges us as adults, it doesn't give us a chance to try and get rehabilitation. That's why I am interested in your beliefs. It feels good to know that someone is willing to help out big time. And ever since the election was going on, I realized a lot of stuff is possible, and it also opened a lot of doors for me. So I just want to let you know that you have a lot of supporters.

-D, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You're right! When we are young, we all make mistakes and we all need a second chance in life. We hope his views on changing this country get to become reality. As a supporter, how are you going to support his ideas to become a reality? We hope he gets to read your appreciations about his plans for the nation. Like you said, everything is possible. So, what are your plans?

Dear Mr. President

Hi, my name is Elijah. I just wanted to say that I am proud of you becoming the first African American president.

I told my whole family to vote for you. I can now look up to you. You have changed history in the whole USA.

I had to write an essay about you and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. About the comparison and differences about you two men. You two got a lot of similarities and differences. I hope there will be a holiday after you. I watched your inauguration. It was really cool. I think you will be a great president.

-Elijah, Alameda

From The Beat: That essay sounds really intriguing, Elijah. Tell us some of the similarities and differences you found in Obama & MLK. We're sure that essay was packed with interesting ideas, we want to hear them too!

Loves & Kids

Love is a word that is so easily skims across or lips.

Rucas (girls) cut their wrists for it.

Vatos try to fill for it.

Notes professing devotion are passed in the hallways,
dropped are passed in the hallways,
dropped on desktops
or places discreetly inside school folders.

It doesn't take much: a women brushing her hair,
the sniff of a vato's cologne and after school walk,
and we're in love.

Babies are easy too.

Many homegirls become mothers,
although they are unfinished children.

Whatever comfort and warmth they lack at homies
also withheld from their babies.

Girls drop out of school.

Homeboys become fathers even in their early teen.

But there's nothing at stake for them;

at the most, having a baby is a source of power, for rep,
like trophies on a mantel.

-Chuko, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Great peace Chuko! What inspired you to write this? Are you speaking from experience?

Violence: Nature or Nurture

Violence comes from a lot of places. Sometimes it comes from households. Some people come from dysfunctional families with a lot of drama in their lives. As a kid you don't know much and when you see someone close to you acting up and doing a fool, you want to be like them, especially if there isn't a positive role model around. Some are born that way. Like if you was born and later on in life everyone realized you have a short temper that could result in violence. Because when I get mad I want to do harm to the enemy but in situations like this, being in the hall, I have to think.

Some young people learn violence from their friends or are pressured into doing violent acts. The bottom line is that violence is going to always be around. Mainly because they're not getting what they want from family or cannot get a job and don't have enough money or cannot find a way out. So they want to hit licks to make money. Well that's it for now. Shout out to all my southern homies.

-Loony, Alameda

From The Beat: Loony, thank you for sharing this thoughtful piece with us about all the reasons people commit violent acts. Do you think people can learn how to be less violent? Have skills like improved communication, anger management and meditation helped you feel more peaceful?

America Needs Change

Remaking America what that means to me it means that they are going to make America way better than today's America because America needs change.

I think that words are more powerful when you are outside and not when you are locked up because when you are locked up they won't really believe nothing you would say because they say you are locked up for a reason. So that's why words are more powerful on the outs.

I think that people learn violence. I think that violence is not good in this life because it gets you no where. The only place that violence takes you is jail and you don't want to be in jail because you feel really lonely and sad. Because you don't have your family with you.

-Rigoberto

From The Beat: Do you plan to make the changes you need to make to stay out of jail? If we all change, then America would have to be different.

Remaking America...

By Obama being president now and him stating that he is going to bring change into the world. I feel that he brought forth strong words to this world to make more changes in society and change for us younger people like bring more programs to the community and giving chances to these kids that didn't have that type of opportunity in making it in life. That's how I feel about Obama saying he is going to make changes.

-Vaikele

From The Beat: Yes, we hope for more opportunity and strength in communities as well! We have to be part of this change.

What America Has To Offer

I take a shhh I wipe my ass with America ninjas think I'm hysterical but I'm just lyrical I been in this world looking for a miracle 'cause I sell this white snow tryin' to feed my son on the go I've been in struggle but ninjas never know the trouble I go thru tryin' to get my son and some food so we can have a feast but ninja's look at me like I'm a animal like I'm a beast so they lock me in a cage but they can't feel me rage rise but when I look into my son's lonely eyes the only thing I could possibly do is cry that's why I sit back and refuse to listen to lies.

-Momo

From The Beat: This piece just breaks our heart, Momo. Your skills are still dazzling, and we KNOW how much you love your son. Of course you want to give him the best life you can, but what he needs most is to his daddy, free. So it's time to find a legit grind - can you do it? Have you talked to your PO about help finding a job?

Violence: Nature Or Nurture

I think that violence comes from scary ninjas because the scariest ninjas will kill you first. Most people use it to prove that they bad but when you ask them why they did what they did they be like cause so and so told me to, they be snitches too you can't trust em. They hear of the next ninja and try to be just like 'em. Most ninjas just came off the porch they wet behind the ears. That's confident I keep what I do in the streets to myself.

-Lil' Marv

From The Beat: We too think it's scary that someone will kill because someone told them to. This makes the streets more dangerous it seems... whether you keep what you do to yourself or not.

Words

Words get people hurt. Words get people killed. Words can make people feel good. Words can make you feel bad. Some words you can ignore and some you can't. Take it how you want. Words are just words.

-Profit Means Money

From The Beat: You say they are "just" words, yet also acknowledge they have the power to hurt and kill...or bring pleasure. What does "prophet" mean?

Didn't Give Up on His Dream

If I had a chance to write the president I would say how proud I am of him he has came a long way and he didn't give up on his dream. I'm glad he made history, the first African American president and I hope he makes the economy better so I can get a job when I get out of jail.

I know his dad's country is happy that someone from their country has made it. I hope he buys them all houses and just do better than Bush and yes it is time for a change.

-John

From The Beat: What kind of job are you going to be looking for when you get out? We hope the economy gets better too—and that there will be more opportunity for everyone.

In The Box

Sick of being locked up, and man I gotta get a job. Mom's and my kid is all that's running through my thoughts. C couldn't do it myself so I guess the system is demanding me. Gotta learn to survive and provide for my family. I struggle to keep my sanity and happiness I guess I never really had it. Growin' up in the streets I took my freedom for granted But I stay solid To God I keep my faith. 'cause in the end he got a plan and I know I'm a change. So I walk tall 'cause I'm solid. Yeah I bang what I bang so I follow my structure. Man I'll never drop my head. It's crazy how much that lil' box can 'cause so much stress

-Mousie

From The Beat: Great poem, and as hard as it is to see you back in here, we do welcome you back to our pages. Now how you going to balance wanting to stay loyal to what you bang and also stay loyal to the plan for change you have in your heart. Can they go together? Are they in conflict? Is there a way to do both?

Obama

I think Obama is going to be a great president he is truly going to change America a lot of people gone hate but hey that should make him do it more.

Man I've been thinking bout my love for so long only she can make me change. What I really want is a baby I guarantee I slow down in everything I do cause I would be with my girl and my baby--shh my momma can't even make me change she in jail her self. Well I'm getting mad so let me end. To everyone that know me I love ya'll and stay up.

-Lil Tonio

From The Beat: We can't wait for change ourselves, and are determined to be part of that change. On the personal note: kids are beautiful and really can help you keep perspective about what's most important. It's hard to be parents though, and you owe it to any kid, and your self to get yourself well situated before you have a baby. Then yes! make a family and start a new life.

Dedication

This dedicated to Irv. 'Cause if I give you this then this fifteen you gone served locked down in yo' room, no books, bright light its called wall therapy four walls all night this is the unit where the adults tell the kids what to do I'm going home tonight I don't know about you I got the coke white air forces and an orange shirt on we teach education so put your thinking cap on

-Carlos

From The Beat: It's good you can joke around with staff - it shows that it's not all bad, even on lockdown. But now that you have your thinking cap on, what are you going to think about?

Dear President Obama

I want to congratulate you for being our new African American president.

I would like to change my community. I would like it to change by not committing crimes, not robbing people, being respectful, being there for our families and children. You can help us to do that by putting more activities out there for us instead of us going to jail and doing crimes like after school programs, etc...

Thank you and good luck President Obama.

-Baby Thickness

From The Beat: We're seeing a lot of Beat writers express this request. Having positive things to do will definitely help you stay out of trouble. But since this doesn't exist right now in your community, what can you do on your own? Look for a job? Read? Teach yourself about things that interest you?

Don't Do Drugs

People be bout actin' hard when they be off that bulooshy poppin' pills lookin' hecka stupid when they can't find they grills smoking on grapes feelin' hecka dumb when they money ain't straight sippin' on bo' lookin' lightweight mental movin' all slow so don't do drugs if you can't handle 'em just sit back ...and stack.

-KeeKee

From The Beat: You and The Beat are of the same mind/So long as you stack on a legit grind/cause dirty money is another kind of drug/turn a bright young star into a burnt out thug.

Violence: Nature Or Nurture?

Violence can happen no matter what.

Violence can be necessary, but at times it shouldn't happen.

Violence comes from anger.

People are born with tendency to commit violent acts.

They learn it from other people and from what happens around them.

-No Violence

From The Beat: Man, we wish there was a name on this, so you could get credit for your very wise insights. Next time, be sure to write your name!

Change

Change my life and the way I do things. Change some of my friends change the way I live. Change da people I be around. Change is when you change yo life and start to do things different in yo life.

-Devonte

From The Beat: We hope these changes will bring you more opportunities to become the man you can be!

To The Fullest

Live your life to the fullest
People always stuck
On some stupid
Sugar honey ice tea
You say you want to be like me
But why can't you be yourself
You quick to be like someone else
But when you start to act like
That person that's a hero in your eyes
You have nothing to show for yourself
I'm trying to help you
You want to be everybody but you
So let me tell you the truth
You look like a damn fool
You know, I know, and everybody around you know
That's not your true you
Live your life to the fullest
And stop putting yourself through this
Live it to the fullest and do you
But promise me this
It will be your best
Live it to the fullest

-Tekiyya

From The Beat: It's not good to lose yourself while trying to be like someone else, but it can be a good thing to aspire to be like something external. If you admire qualities in others and want to own them yourself, that can be a good thing. As long as you don't lose yourself or your beliefs in the process, you're good.

Back In The Mix

Yeah man it's Jb we back in the mix on that shhh
Free my ninjas man I'm up in this thang
getting nightmares like Freddy
I ain't trippin' I know my ninjas out there rockin'
I'm a bounce back until then, I'm written in this Beat.
Expressing my appreciation for what they're doing
To help me get through this time.

-Jb

From The Beat: And The Beat appreciates you right back, so keep the words flowing and we'll printing them!

RIP Emmit

To my brother Emmit we miss you and we gone start mobbin for you and we not gone stop the squad gone stay and I'm gone see you when I get up there I love you bra.

-Lil' Chuck

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. What would he say to you, if he could?

Me

Yea my name Shay
I need to hurry and find my dream mate
Life so real
My wounds still aren't heal
No one knows how I deeply feel
To hide my emotions I stay off pills
When I think of my life I get chills
Please take me far away up the hills
this the end
The Beat's friend.

-Shay

From The Beat: Great poem, Shay. You tell so much about your life in just a few lines. Will you write us some more, about whether being off pills has helped or hurt you, about the "chills" in your life, about your deep feelings. This is like an introduction to "me" and now we want to read the whole book!!!

Tired..

Free Lil' Purp, I been here 9 months. It's cool I I'm still mobbin' and stayin' away from trouble. The judge tryin' to play me so I'm gonna keep cool, knock this lil' 'time out, get my education up in school. I ain't gone trip off the time, I'm gonna knock this out So I sit up in my room and meditate and think and keep my head up as I sit down and blink. Free the kid man 'cause I'm tired of this stuff as I do one hand push ups and continue to get buff

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: You get your physical workouts in, but it also seems like locked up you are trying to give yourself a mental workout too - get your mind strong for the upcoming challenges. What does "mental strength" mean to you?

RIP Ethers

Man, my ninja Ether was a beast. Some haters knocked my ninja down 'cause he was movin' real mean. But he ain't gotta worry about nothing, he's in a better place shinning in paradise. But my ninja live through me. Just know I'm gonna hold you down 'till I join you.

-Lil' Sani

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear about the death of your friend. You say that he continues to live through you—what is the best way that you can preserve his memory? What would make him proud? Do you think he would want you to live as short of a life as he did? Or would he want to see you become a grown man, with a good life?

Black Panthers

Words have brought people together for good and bad. Better or worse. Words can cause fights and start destruction through out the world. They can start movements and bring different cultures together.

-Lil' Dough Boi

From The Beat: Clearly you know the power of words. How can you use them to improve your own life?

A Better Chance

I think its great to have a president that a minority. That means it's a better chance to change. The End

-Fat Boy

From The Beat: We agree with you, and share your hope and desire for change.

Back in the Hall

What's up Beat, this is Young Money , back in the hall again for the ninth time. Most likely I'm going to ROP hopefully not CYA. I'm not likin' this unit. You only get a phone call on Saturdays and I don't like how certain staff is runnin' this unit. I can't wait 'till I start workin' here in a couple years. I can't wait until I go to wherever I'm gonna go so I can pimp that, fast!

Maybe if I write the judge a letter he will let me go to camp again and graduate that placement again. It has happened to other people, but I'm not too sure it's going to happen to me. I'll see on the 6th of Feb. I'll make sure to write The Beat so you all can find out what happened.

-Juan

From The Beat: What worries us most is that this is your 9th time. You want to work with youth one day, that's a great thing - but before you help others, you need to help yourself. What kind of things could you do, this time around, to get a different result?

Violence Second Resort

I believe violence is the second resort. I do not think violence is instilled in people from birth because if that was the case everybody would be violent, and everybody is not violent.

For example, Dr. Martin Luther king Jr. People bombed his house and he kept the peace. Babies aren't violent. What I think is that people who are just all out violent all the time are the ones who can't control their anger. It's just the fact that some people who are just all out violent all the time are the ones who can't control their anger.

Everybody has anger and violent ways about them, that much I do believe. It's just the fact that some people have more self control and know how to channel their anger in a way that it doesn't hurt others.

-Rikki Baybee

From The Beat: Sounds like you really do believe we all have violence in us, it's just that some people have learned how to control it while others haven't.

Bullets Is Flying

Was real young, a lot of young life dying.

Bullets are flying,

leavin' a lot of lives crying.

He posted on the strip with forty cal's on his hip.

Money he flips

so every girl never trips.

But if that boy slips

his body will get filled with the tips.

By that young gun

his big brother is my son.

Done nothing but sell coke.

But even though I sell drugs I be praying for some hope.

Brainwashed forever

'cause your boy wants some dough.

And since I sell drugs I should never go broke.

When the bullets fly I pray to God I don't die.

I'm still alive with nothing but God on my side.

I was raised by the gun

I pray that God tell me why.

So when God sees me in heaven one day

he's gonna say that every time they got to shooting

that I made the bullets fly away.

And to the Lord I should pray that happy days come

today.

You know what young Laden say Rest in Peace young Jay.

-Dirt Laden

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about what happened to young Jay, it is a tragedy. Tell us Dirt Laden—how do we make the bullets stop flying? Also, tell us how God became apart of your life!

The Kiss

It happened so quickly

The world must have shook

I'd always hoped it would happen like it does in a book.

He looked at me softly and then touched my hair

I felt so special like he really did care.

He leaned over slowly my heart upped its pace

Right at that moment we were face to face.

When his lips touched mine I thought I would melt

His kiss was the sweetest thing I ever felt.

-Lil' Pooh Bear

From The Beat: This is a beautiful image of the joy of that first kiss. If you wrote it with a specific person in mind, we hope that he continued to bring you happiness and treat you well. Because the sweetness of true love lasts beyond the kiss!

When It's On Sight

When it's on sight
 you gotta watch your every move,
 because that one wrong move can cost you to lose.
 When it's on sight
 please try not to slip because if you do you might get
 flipped,
 a lot of lost blood can make you sick
 unless it's death on sight you lose your strength,
 you lived that life for the fame
 but when you gone they don't even remember your
 name.
 So every move I keep my thing
 unless I'm incarcerated
 fighting the pain.
 While others throwing money like it's a game
 I'm killing for mine and that's a shame.
 I wish I could leave the streets
 but I gotta do what I gotta do so baby Lay can eat.
 Tired of watching his every step
 I'm trying to have like four houses that cost some mills
 I'm tired of settling for less and that's real.
 Grown man, not a kid, it's '09 its time to do it big..
 So live your life and don't let life beat you
 'cause when you're down
 the love of your life might turn into a stripper and that's real.
 People change when you're behind a cell

so live right and that's real.

-D Lay

From The Beat: D Lay—how do you YOU live your life, so that life doesn't beat you? What does that mean to you?

Me & My Girl Together

Man me and ma girl--I really can't even talk to her and
 that shh messing me up but we gone bounce back real
 fast. One thing for sure we down right now swear to god
 we gone bounce.

-Nuttso Savage

From The Beat: It must be frustrating to be separated from those you love. Support each other in making positive changes for your lives.

My Love Life

I could love to a limit until it ain't right.
 I can love her forever 'cause she in my love life.
 It's this one girl that I really see who won't never leave
 me,
 'cause she got me going crazy.
 She said I was the best but what you do it just amaze
 me.
 You will always be my heart and my heart belongs to you
 I'll say them great three words "baby I love you."
 I think about you everyday 'cause you stay on my mind,
 you should be Mrs. R. 'cause you so damn fine.
 I won't never lie to you 'cause you keep it solid with me
 I
 I don't care about them girls man, it's just you and me
 I'll get you what you want if I can't
 I hope you understand as you say "Baby it's ok
 You'll always be mine man
 This is my life hope I repeat it twice
 'cause its just me and you going with my love life.

-Lil' Quan

From The Beat: Just in time for Valentine's Day! We hope this love poem comes from the heart, and we DEFINITEY hope that you're not speaking to a real life Mrs. R. - i.e. someone too old for you!

Grandma's Strong Hold

Strong hold, is what my grandma got on me
 I use to hate that strong hold
 Now I've come to see
 That's she's only protecting me
 As if I were her own child
 She calls me her child
 And says with the success she know I will have
 She will jump and shout so loud
 She will draw hundreds into a crowd
 Just to hear her say
 Look what success my strong hold
 Has brought for my child
 She lets me know she has no doubts
 She lets me know she's proud
 And that she'll never walk out
 Not because I'm her grandchild
 But because I am her child
 And she knows as long as she got
 A hold that strong her child
 Can and will never go wrong
 I'm glad my grandma's got a strong hold on me

-Poetically Misunderstood

From The Beat: Sounds like you've got a really great relationship with your grandmother. We all need someone to believe in us, and push us to do better. This is what your grandma does for you, so be thankful you have her!

With Them

I'm tired of this Jail shhh I can't wait to get out, when I
 get out I'm gonna hop on my little brother three wheeler
 and ride around all day slappin' music! Then I'm gonna
 slide to my grandma house and get me some homemade
 Mexican food that I miss. Most of all I miss my family and
 I can't wait to be back with them.

-Roland

From The Beat: After you eat and ride that three wheeler what are you going to do to make sure you don't come back?

As I Sit In A Cell

As I sit in a cell I think
 As I sit in a cell I hate life
 As I sit in a cell I think why
 As I sit in a cell I ask how
 As I sit in a cell I'm not well
 As I sit in a cell I feel like I'm in hell
 As I sit in a cell I realize I messed up
 As I sit in a cell I can't see outside
 As I sit in a cell it makes me ask why
 I protected myself and hurt everyone else
 As I sit in a cell I can't tell whether I'm going to heaven
 or hell
 As I sit in a cell I count down how many days I got left
 in this place
 As I sit in a cell the calendar and time is my best friend
 also my worst enemy.
 Beat can you feel me?
 I'm thinking a lot right now and don't want to stay in here
 for this BS.
 I need to go home and be with my family and do what I do to
 make every thing come back to normal and go to college.
 I have stuff to do... I'm a man now I need to act like one....

-Big Hungry

From The Beat: We want to see you free too, but from what you've written about your life, it doesn't seem like you've ever had much 'normal'. So it's like you are going to have to get out and totally reinvent yourself, and that means finding those positive influences we all need. Where are you going to start looking?

Fire and Water

I feel the fire in my veins
It's hard to stop 'cause under my skin I feel the rage to hurt
But the water put me out and let me cruise like a boat
If the boat sink then the fire is back
Then I feel I been played never the less fire always stay strap
I can go the right way but the water will always wear off
Then I get dry and hot then the heat pisses me off.

-Moe

From The Beat: Sounds like you feel out of control, with a fire inside you that can only be stopped by something external. Try searching inside yourself for something to cool you down - what calms you, what helps you vent? Maybe running or doing pushups or listening to music - find your calm within.

Words

The power of words is big but I have learned to appreciate them more by reading in my room here at juvie. Books help me do time and expand my thoughts give me different thoughts. Like books about people doing 25+ to life. I compare that to me and thank the Lord.

-Peep Game Tae

From The Beat: Are there any books in particular that have made a big impact you since being in here? And once you get out, do you think you will continue to read?

For 2009

What I'm excited the most about the year of 2009 and having an African American president is that it gives me a chance to believe that I can do anything I set my mind to, and that anything is possible. And each morning I will wake up encouraging myself, telling myself, yes I can!

-Da Baddest

From The Beat: That is a great way to wake up every morning! If only we could all get up and face the day this way, our communities would be in much better shape.

Remaking America

Change has to start with individual people wanting to change for the better.

No matter how good of intentions the president has there will always be a group of people that will try their hardest to bring others down with them, but they only succeed if you let them get the best of you.

-Chris

From The Beat: There will always be those who hurt and those who help. What do you think you can do to be one of the people that helps, especially in your community?

Non- Violence/ Violence

Non-violence is what some want but for others, they were raised up in a house with mom, dad, brother fighting so that's all they know.

When he/she have a problem they result to violence and guns but later wind up in jail. That's all they know. Guns, knives, fights are what there use.

But Americans want change but you can't change the only way of life that someone knows. Somehow maybe in few years maybe America can change but it'll take a couple years.

-Demarcus

From The Beat: You raise some good points Demarcus. How do you think we can stop the idea of violence being normal?

Words

Words are very strong.
There's lies, compliments, racial slurs, hatin' all kind of shhh.
But when you say the wrong shhh to a ninja like me "words"
I get you knocked down straight like that.
Shhh like "what you looking at," or "what's up" with a mug on yo face...
that's when I'm a get it popping.
I don't let words make me mad because that gives the other person the power.
But certain words be making it seem like a ninja tryin' to get on you
so I won't hesitate.

-Nature

From The Beat: This may not be what you want to hear, but you just totally contradicted yourself. You say words don't get to you, but becoming violent towards someone just for saying "what's up" is exactly what that is - you letting words get to you hard and very easily too.

The Best President Ever!

I think Obama is going to be the best president we ever had. I don't want him to get assassinated. I think he is going to change a lot of rules to make this country better.

If I were president I would help schools and make the pay in this country higher. A better and safer place where kids could play and get a better education.

I pray he is going to do what he says he is going to do. He has a wife and a nice family. He has been though a lot in his life, he has been to Juvenile Hall before, just like me. Thanks Obama.

-Lil' Monster

From The Beat: We're all hoping for Obama to stay safe. It's great that you look up to our President. Do you consider him a role model? President Obama is working hard to reshape America by improving the aspects of the US that are not so great. Change can't happen all at once though, little things build up to it. Do you think there are things in your community that you can do to help the process?

I Think Of You

Locked down, late night in my cell I think of you
I thank you for loving me and staying true
I can't lie I miss you too much. You got me feigning for your touch
Ya keep ya boy doing strong while I wait to get free
I can't wait for you to see the new and improved me
No more staying out all night, leaving you all alone
No more taking you for granted, pretty soon, I'll be coming home
Then I can hold you in my arms again and give you real kisses
I want to thank you for giving me all your love
From the minute I got to know you I knew God blessed me from above
Baby girl your smile shines brighter than the sun
I'm proud to tell the world that you're my only one
I think of you so often, it's kind of pathetic
Stay with me my lady and you won't regret it
But until the day I get free and hold you all I can do is think of you.

-Scotty

From The Beat: This is such a heartfelt piece, clearly you care a lot about this special person. If she cares as much about you as you seem to care about her, you've got a really great thing going. Don't lose her by doing stuff you know isn't worth it - commit to making a change for you and for her.

Mother's Love

From when you born 'till when you die your mom is the first one to show love. She the first to tell me to wear a glove when I mess up and go to jail. My mom is the first one to know. My mom always has my back even when I'm wrong. When she show love, her love is strong. When I be in the streets she is always worried. When she tells me to come home that means she loves me.

-Savaughn

From The Beat: Lots of young people think that when their parents punish or keep you close to home that it means they don't care, but usually it's the exact opposite. A mother who lets you run around and do anything you feel like any time of day or night doesn't care about your well being.

Violence

Violence happens in a lot of places like the streets and war.

People get killed over violence every day.

They need to take guns off of the streets.

If people need guns they should have it with a license to protect their family.

People get robbed with guns and deal drugs with guns.

I think we have alot violence in America.

-RoShawn

From The Beat: It's upsetting that guns are so easy to come by. It also seems that it's hard for people to be responsible with such a dangerous weapon. Besides licenses, what do you think our government can do to assure that people are responsible gun owners?

RIP Skrilla Mike

Man you know that's messed up

How they did my big homie

Man they hit my ninja up they can't even do nothing

He just broke a fight up next thang you know he's getting picked up

Don't trip I got yo' fam yo' mama and my grams.

-Dre

From The Beat: What at tragedy. We're sorry your boy got caught up - have you got an update for us? Is his family doing OK? We're glad to hear you're thinking of them. Our apologies for the misspelling last week.

Dear President

I'm so happy for you Mr. Obama. I feel having you as a president will help our society. With you I feel change. I'm hoping you will create more activities to reduce criminal activity. I have hope in your decisions in being our president. Congratulations and thank you.

-Valentina

From The Beat: A lot of people are hopeful that Obama can make real change. Creating after school activities is a really good way to help keep youth out of trouble. Good suggestion!

A Letter To The President

Barack Obama,

I'm wondering how long do you think it will take to change the big mess that Bush made. Barack do you think you can make a change in America? I want to know what you gonna do about the war up in Iraq or about the economy or schools. And what about killers or the Oakland streets or prison centers?

-Lamont

From The Beat: You are asking a lot of tough questions, and that's good. We'd love to hear you get more specific though—what are the issues around schools or prisons that you think need change?

Remaking America

Remaking America means to me is that by keeping it cleaner by stopping the littering and stuff like trashing the ocean.

Obama will also change the community by making the public more safe and by making more cop cars patrolling around cities.

Obama will give out more jobs to people and hopefully Obama will bring the economy back up, so people will not lost their jobs or houses. He will also be giving some money or food to the homeless so they won't starve.

-Obama Nation

From The Beat: The environment is in desperate need of attention and care, so do the homeless! Luckily these are two things that Obama hopes to change. You can also help with keep our streets clean and assisting those in need. These sound like important issues to you. What part of America do you think requires the most significant transformation?

Change The World

Obama is going to change the world by stopping the war that they are having in Iraq. He is going to give more money and going to build more homes for the homeless or give them more food and water. He could give them more money and give schools more books and money and stop the stuff going on the streets by taking more time out of his office to create more jobs, raise pay checks and raise taxes.

It's 2009, things need to change, we've got to change this world because if we don't do nothing stuff gets worse and more black people going to Juvenile Hall. People are going to get mad because Obama is not going to build more give schools more money. People think Obama is not going to help healthcare and the homeless.

-Denzell

From The Beat: You definitely understand that you have a future ahead of you. It's possible that Obama's presidency can guarantee you a great adulthood. Some people don't have faith that Obama can make his promises happen. You seem to be confident he can tackle each of his goals. Why do you think some people don't have the same faith in Obama as you do?

Me and My Choices

From my point of view violence comes from one and only one person. And that person is me. You decide what you want to do. Nobody tells you to do something you don't want to do.

So when the judge asked me why I cut my ankle monitor I said that it was because I had family problems. That was a lie because deep inside I know I did it because I wanted to have freedom, I wanted to kick it with my homies, do drugs, and be around girls. I know I did a bad thing and that's why I am facing my time in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

I know I can't go to my room and cry I just have to wait until they tell me, "Ivan get all your stuff ready you're going home." That day I am going to be happy and go and spend some time with my loving Mom and family.

I know it would be hard to lay off my hood and my homies because I feel like they are my family but in order to be something in life I have to make some sacrifices so I know it's going to be hard but God and me only know if I am able to finish what I haven't started.

-Ivan

From The Beat: It's great that you recognized the mistakes you made in the past. You understand what you did wrong and it appears that you are paying attention to the things that are most important to you. When you get out, spend the time with your family and begin taking the steps that will keep you home forever. The people you surround yourself will influence your decisions. It'll be good for you to spend time with your loved ones, we're glad you know this. Keep reflecting on your past!

Remaking America

That means to me and to my community that we need to stop this violence, stealing, and killing. We need to start fresh and get our minds right, get off the block and get jobs. And never say never.

-Dwight

From The Beat: It's upsetting how much violence surrounds us. It seems like you want to see a change in your community. Maybe there are things that you can do to assure that the violence can begin to end. Think of some ways that you can urge productive change!

Dear Barack Obama

Hello President, my name is Kumonee, I'm 15 years old and I believe in everything you said you're going to do to change the world, I never thought we would have a black president, it's a "first", I think you're a good President, and I'm ready for a change.

-Kumonee

From The Beat: It is pretty incredible that we have elected our first black President. To believe that it may never happen and then to witness Obama winning the election, is an astonishing experience. Do you think that there are other "impossible" things that can become possible?



Life

Man it 2009 we got Obama as president but a ninja still in jail but if he can become president then I can stay out jail and get my life together. We just got lock down when he become president so all I can say is we can do what you want this yo boy lil chuck comin' from max 2 and to all... stay up.

-Lil' Chuck

From The Beat: We like that...if he can become president, then you can get your life together. What do you need to do first?

Dear Barack

I am in juvenile hall in San Leandro, CA. I am writing this letter to let you know that I'm glad you're President of the United States of America. I hope you're going to do what you say you're going to do for America. Like lowering taxes and healthcare and also ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

-Antwon

From The Beat: It feels good to be proud of your President. What do you hope he can change in our country that would impact you the most? Think about your future. What can President Obama do to assure you a successful life?

Letter To The President

Dear Obama,

I want to say "congratulations" on your election. You are the first African American president. You made history. I want to wish you good luck with your future tasks.

Also I hope you are going to do those things you say you are going to do. I hope you accomplish everything you wish too. I hope you bring the economy back up. I wish you the best of luck with your years in the president's chair.

-Tj

From The Beat: It's pretty amazing that we all got to witness history take place. The next four years we're hopefully going to see all the changes President Obama promised. What specifically do you want to make sure our President accomplishes?

Boom!

In my own words violence comes from what you see and what you hear and if you see something you don't like or hate you will have anger and you will hold it in until you cant take it anymore and it comes out and something bad happens and you BOOM! Explode. I am speaking about this from personal point of view.

-Dwight

From The Beat: Emotions are powerful and they can definitely force people to do things that they don't want to. Anger is especially dangerous. You seem to think that anger and violence are strongly related. Since you are speaking from personal experience, do you have ways of tackling your hatred so that it won't lead to violence?

All The Life

Boy this hall shhh is weak
Every morning they tell us to fold up our sheets
When all we go do is go to our room and go to sleep
I swear they always have us in our room
It's torture from doom.
I always have regret.

-Marmar

From The Beat: Try and expand on some of your ideas though. What is the most frustrating part of being in Juvenile Hall? Talk about what's going on in your head; what are you thinking? We want to hear more from you, because this piece is a great start.

Violence

I think not all people are born violent but others are for example non-violent people if you attack or yell at them they wont react in a violent way they will react non-violently. Like walking away or ignoring you. And if you attack a violent person they'll attack back or if you yell at them they'll yell back.

-Domonic

From The Beat: There is a strong distinction between those that are violent and those that are not. What kind of person are you? If you walk away from attacks, that's great. You are avoiding conflict. If you are a violent person, what are some ways to avoid confrontation?

Dear Obama

I am a fourteen-year-old kid and I hope you do what you said you were going to do, because my mom voted for you and I would like you to help Oakland, CA. And can you write me back?

-Youngster For Obama

From The Beat: You're pretty young and have your whole life ahead of you. In four years you are going to be able to vote just like your mother. What are some of the things you'd vote for in order to see change happen in Oakland?

Jus' Keep Doing My Program

Wha's good with The Beat? You know it's the same ol' same ol' wit' me. I just knocked out a tenth of this time up here at the Ranch. If ya reading this, then y'all know I knocked out another tenth, so that mean I got eight more to go. Time flying faster then I thought it would. All I gotta keep doing is a straight program an' this gone all be ova.

All the lil' homies doin' time, just know that nobody got a L by they name. An all my females, leave the reckless shhh alone. Just be a lady, 'cause that what attracts me. If you down for me, you ain't gotta prove it. Jus' keep the love strong, feel me?

Oh, yeah. I almost forgot, to all my fans, I'm halfway done writin' the album, so get ya concert money ready for when I jump out this G-thang.

-Fresh

From The Beat: You're doing it just right, putting one foot in front of the other day-by-day and walking toward that light that you see at the end of that tunnel. The advice you give to your females is just as important to apply to yourself: "leave that reckless shhh alone." If you do that, you'll truly be able to enjoy the fruits that will be coming your way when your album is done and out, like you! Keep striving!

Good To Witness History

It was good thing I here to see history when Obama became the 44th President. He is black and I think he going make a difference in the United States of America. He talk about making change and stop war.

-God Ali

From The Beat: We hope he does stop the war. What other differences do you think he is going to make for this country? What changes would you like to see?

Crackers Can't Hold Me!

Wha's poppin' with The Beat? Me, just thuggin' this Ranch shhh out, ya heard me. But anyways, I'm tired of these crackers trying to control me. They can't hold me down forever, ya heard. You can lock me up, crackers, I'ma get out and do the same thang. I'm out.

-Cb

From The Beat: Same old nonsense. Are you so blind that you can't see that if you "do the same thang," so will the system? We hope you don't figure out that they can hold you forever after it's too late to do anything about it!

Doin' Me

What's good, mayne? You know this ya boy, Ulala. Haven't wrote in this thang in a hot minute. But, check it... Up heah at the Ranch, doin' me, as usual, still stayin' solid, ya dig? Still livin' life to the fullest. But as of right now I'm on pause.

But peep this, homie, ya boy's mind is gettin' situated right now, thinkin' this, thinkin' that... Or, should I, or should I not?

But for me, things done changed. It done flipped that otha way around. So watch who you associate wit', homie, 'cause ya closest homeboy could be the one... You ninjas know what I mean.

But check it: to all the homies, keep ya heads up, 'cause you know the sky limit. Homie. Love ya! Trust no one!

-Ulala

From The Beat: You've been on a pause for quite a while, Ulala! When do you plan to press the "start" button and move your life in a new direction? You can't get through life trusting no one. The trick is to pick the right friends. Are you trustworthy? If the answer is yes, then you know there must be others who are trustworthy, too. With this change you write about, how will your new life be different when you're back home?

Don't Put Me In A Box

Don't put me in a box
Full of bricks and tiles
With locks that make living
Not worthwhile
Wanting to see someone else
Tired of seeing the same dudes
I'm disgusted with myself
Don't put me in a box
Because it makes me hungry for the grind
Not trippin' because
I'm gone have another chance to shine

-Sp

From The Beat: Who put you in the box, SP? What were the steps that led you to the box? We ask that question so you look very carefully at the steps you have to avoid so that your steps don't lead you back. Being "hungry for the grind" could be a ticket right back, so be very careful how you define "the grind."

I'm At The Ranch While My Son Is Home

What's up, Beat Within? I remember the first time I got locked up. I just turned into my teen year. The second time I was a year older. After that I came back, fifteen years old, with a son already. Now I'm seventeen years old at the Ranch, and my son is a year old. I'ma get out when I'm eighteen years old, and my son two years old. So, late, Beat Within.

-Big D

From The Beat: We hate reading about the babies that are brought into this world by babies who cannot yet take care of themselves. It's irresponsible, especially when pregnancy is so easily prevented! It only keeps the circle going. When you get out, will you try to be a father to your own son who has really never known a father? If not, where do you imagine he will be when he is a teenager? Has losing your freedom so often led you to any conclusions about how you want to change the way you live on the outs, or will there just be more of the same, except as an adult instead of a juvenile? What have you learned? What can you teach?

You A Trip

Now I'ma tell ya like a man, I don't owe y'all shhh
An' I'ma say this shhh again, I don't owe y'all shhh.
But before a ninja had somethin', I ain't have nothin'
(My kids). yeah, they still love (my friends), I had couple of 'em
But wasn't nobody tryna bust it, tryin' to see what was up
When my shoes was bent up with a hole in the front
And I'll get mad at E and put a hole in the blunt
When my daddy lost the house, we moved wit' grandma fo' a month
Then that month turned into a year, and I turned straight to them streets
Then my dog got caught with that heat
I ain't seen him since I was a teen
When I was a lil' boy, I used to look up to grown men
My dad used to tell me I need some new friends
I guess back then it just didn't make sense
Come now, keep it real, you be knowin' me since I was lil'
An' you ain't even kept it real
Man, that's why a ninja feel like you a trip

-Cal

From The Beat: Whether you owe him anything or not, do you understand what your dad was trying to tell you when he said you needed new friends? If it's not your father you're writing to, then whoever it is you "don't owe shhh," who do you owe? Has anyone sacrificed for you? What do you owe yourself? Has losing your homie (who "got caught with that heat") made you see things in a different way, or do things in a different way? How will you avoid his fate? How will you be different from your father?

What Remaking America Means

Remaking America mean to me that America will change for the better now that Obama is the President of the USA. Obama say that "the challenges we face are real. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this: they will be met!"

Obama's words are true to me. What he said in his speech today is true to me. He can and will make the better for America. Don't matter what other people think. I know he will change America.

-Bri

From The Beat: The new president gives us all hope for a better tomorrow, Bri. But what are the changes you hope he brings about. And what do you think are the changes he wants from you? In other words, what do you expect from him, and what does he expect from you?

Born With Violence

I feel like people was born with violence because they grow up being bad at school. That's how it first starts. Then they start picking up guns and stuff like that. That's when they end up in jail.

-Ronald

From The Beat: Do you mean that some people are born violent but other people are not, or that we are all born with violence? Do you believe that "all men are created equal?" If so, why do some act out violently and others do not?

Stay From Around Me

Yeah, let me say what's up with The Beat. I'm gon spit this rap.

That boy' name all through that thang, black and white
He told them crackers shhh they ain't even like
Went fed and got out, and act like it's all right
Shhh, that ninja you snitch on, they my ninja life
And you running with that shady ninja like that ninja right

Birds of feather flock together, y'all just alike
You converse with dude, but how you break bread with
a ninja dog and you know he trife
They go from real to fake ninja over night
You can't flip it now, you a police for life
Stay from 'round me. Damn, ninja, you ain't my type

-Rocket

From The Beat: This piece comes dangerously close to being a threat, and almost didn't make it in The Beat — even though your rap skills shine through. We hope whoever you're addressing does stay away from you, but the reality is that this whole system is built on the backs of snitches, and it always will be. The only way to keep it from happening is not to do anything that someone else can exploit for their own benefit. Don't do the things that someone can trade for his own benefit, or you'll be facing this situation again.

Words

What's good with The Beat? It's yo' Low Boi Acie up in here. Ain't nothing goin' on in this thang. A ninja just doing his time so a real ninja can get back to them streets and my son.

I want to write about words 'cause the wrong words can get you hurt, trust me 'cause if you running yo' lips, you ain't about yo' shhh. So the best thing you can do is keep yo' mouth closed and it's go be all good.

-Acie

From The Beat: We can't keep our mouth closed 'cause we have to say this: when you get back to the streets, we hope you really are about your shhh, which means we hope you're about taking care of your son. You can't take care of the street and your son. You're going to have to sacrifice one for the other, trust us. The only question is, which one will you serve and which one will you sacrifice. Think about it.

Change Police Tactics

What's up with The Beat? It ya boy Opps back in this hole fo' some shhh I didn't do. Man, I wish Obama would change the way police act, and the way they do things.

-Opps

From The Beat: How should Obama bring about the change in police attitudes and actions that you want to see? What kind of changes do you think Obama would like you to make?

I'm Really In YGC

Aye, let me tell y'all something. I got caught up in some stuff with my cousin and friend. We all came to the halls, and they let them go, and I still in here. I'm hecka mad, because I want to go home to my dad or may grandma.

Man, I can't believe this. I'm really in YGC. And a couple of days before I came in here, I was talking to my cousin and telling her I don't know what I will do if I come in here. But I'm not tripping, because when I get out this thang, I'm not coming back.

-Lay Lay

From The Beat: Tell us what you plan to do differently when you get out so that you can keep the promise that you'll never come back. (It's easier to make that promise when you're locked up than to keep it when you are free.)

Words

Man, what's good with The Beat? This ya boy Daddy-O writin' on this topic words. Man, words a really get shhh poppin', fo' real, 'cause if a ninja say the wrong thing, fo' real, anything could happen. Fo' me if a brother say the wrong thang to me, I'ma get on his head. Words a get somebody killed, fo' real. Fo' real, words start everything.

This ya boy, the one and only Daddy-O, until we meet again.

-Daddy O

From The Beat: We wish the one and only Daddy-O would have put in some examples of what the "wrong words" are. But what you said about words starting everything is exactly what the Bible says: "In the beginning was the word..." (John 1:1)

Dear Obama,

I'm glad you are in the White House. The main things I would like to ask you is to please bring both my brothers and all my friends home from Iraq.

-Stacia

From The Beat: This is really too shot to publish, Stacia, but it carries such an important message that we violated our own rules and printed it anyway. If President Obama could ask you for something, what do you think it would be?

Moving With The Jungle

Yeah, it's young Lando tryna get my game tight 'cause I refuse to come here again. I gotta get real maffa in my movement. I'm not playing no more games. I'm on a mission to get this money. I'ma try to be a rapper 'cause that a free mill ticket.

But yeah, I gotta get back to the money. So I'm moving with the jungle or I am not moving at all. I am so solid it ain't funny.

-Lando

From The Beat: What will it take for you to realize that there is no such thing as "a free mill ticket?" Everything has a cost, and the one you are paying now should be warning enough that the fast lane to riches leads to a fast end — adding riches only for this system that has control over your life.

"I've Been Down"

(JJC Mac Dre Remix)

I've been down

For oh so long

Starin' at these brick walls

Same old song

At six in the mornin' I'm up in the shower

Staff on my intercom talkin' some shhh 'bout work detail

It's seven in the morning, he must be sicko

Or just plain stupid for thinkin' I might go

I cuss him out

He gave me distance an' called a condition

Now these shady staff wanna do it the rough way

Six peace officers is what it takes to cuff me

Tell me, grab my shhh an' send me for twenty-four hours, a DRB

Damn, I've been down for oh so long

Starin' at these brick walls

Same old song

I wanna go home

I wanna go home

I said "Go home"

Not no damn group home!

-I Don't Know Her Name

From The Beat: You've done a good job of remixing Mac Dre's lyrics to fit your situation, but the situation itself makes us wonder about your choices. Why would you cuss out staff for telling you it's time for work detail? Well, if you think a 24-hour DRB was worth the cussing, then so be it. The hard truth is that when you did whatever it was that gave the system power over your life, this is what you invited!

A Letter To Obama

Hi! Can you make more libraries for the young, so we have less violence and more reading to help out the mind? More jobs for the youth to keep young kids off the streets stealing? We trying to make it less people jail and more people out here, getting their education, so they would have a good job when they get older.

-Mason

From The Beat: Obama is trying to create more jobs, and we think that's exactly what he should be doing. You're also right that education is the key to your own future success, but you don't have to wait for the President to accomplish that. You can make sure you go to school every day, even when you don't want to, and build the foundation you need to move past where you are. Good luck.

The Beat Ain't Real

Man, this Beat don't want the real beat, so I'ma give y'all a pound. Y'all ain't ready for no real shhh, so y'all let the fake and phony holla that phony shhh. Y'all know who y'all is. Freak The Beat since I can't curse. (lol)

-Robert

From The Beat: Is it possible that people can have different experiences and different ways of looking at the world, different ways of acting without one being "real" and the other "fake"? If we "ain't ready for no real shhh," why don't you enlighten us.

Ain't Trippin'

What's up Beat? It's ya boy Isaiah still up in here. It's going on five months still in this G-thang. But I'm not trippin'. They can't hold a brother for long. I'm doing my time. Just one thang is don't let time do you, you do time. That all. Lata.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: We're waiting for when you start trippin' about giving up any part of your life to this place. That'll tell us that you're ready to put yourself in control of your life, and not leave it to others.

Silent Tears For A Black President

Hey, Beat. It's ya lady, Lil' Lady T. I'm still in this thang. Damn! Dam! Damn!

But, yeah, though, we gotta black President, yo! We gotta black family in the White House! Seeing the inauguration damn near brought tears to my eyes. But I couldn't cry in front of all these females in the halls. They gone think I'ma sucka, LOL.

But anyhoo, seeing that made me realize that we as blacks can do anything. So I'm looking forward to seeing what Obama promised us — change! An' when I get out, I'ma try to do that, too — change!

-Ladie T

From The Beat: Maybe that's one difference between childhood and adulthood — we didn't do anything to hide the tears that streaked our cheeks as we watched our new President being sworn into office! What we like most about this piece is that you realize that the change Obama has promised comes not from him, alone, but also from you (and from each of us). What do you hope he changes? What does he hope you change?

Gettin' Out This G-Thang

What's really good with The Beat? This the kid, Yung Von, gettin' fed up with this juvenile hall shhh, yamsay'n'? I'm ready to just beat this trial an' get back to doin' me, but this time play ma cards a lil' smoother. Like Rihinna and Ti said, I'm just tryna live my life. The kid tryna get this papa, an' at the same time, watch out for these haters, yamsay'n'? But it straight Yung Life an' the kid gone shine 'til the casket drop. I'm outie.

-Yung Von

From The Beat: If you think you can get your "papa" by doing what you've been doing — "doin' me" — without paying the same price, then you're still thinking like a child. You won't "shine" until you realize that shining requires some sacrifices that come along with the slow and steady route that starts with getting your education. We hope you don't learn these truths the hard way.

I Don't Believe Him

Hey, Obama made President. How do you feel, 'cause I feel all right. But hey, first black President.

But I don't like him because he was talking about his struggle, and how do you struggle when you go to Princeton and graduate on top of your classes and struggle? And Princeton, though not many blacks go there.

-Derrell

From The Beat: We're not sure why you don't like him just because he didn't share your struggles. Being smart, graduating from a good university, and even becoming the President of the United States doesn't mean he didn't have to struggle — especially as a black man in America. Give him a break!

Words

Words words words...

I say don't speak it if you ain't 'bout it
And don't think it if I can't pronounce it
Me, I'm just me, I don't act

Don't be notha person and get blapped
But cha know what I'm sayin'

When I say when I say it, though, dawgie

Check me out, though, puppy

I see you, you see me...

-Jabba

From The Beat: Does this mean you never front, never tell an adult (cop? counselor? Judge?) anything but the whole truth? Sometimes, we'd rather people speak about the dirt they really didn't do, than do the dirt and keep silent about it. Which is more important, the things you do or the things you say?

Don't Be Now

What up with The Beat? This your boy, Cenious. In the halls, waitin' for me to get out.

Why these ninjas out here act like they with the shhh and they not? Ninjas is window talkers. Ninjas do all that talk behind the back, but smile in they face. Ninjas ain't with the shhh.

I got with the shhh a few years ago. Nowadays you gotta have a watta for protecting. Ninjas is fresh off the porch, try to say they bein' with the shhh. When you in the beef, you have to watch your back. This shhh ain't cool. To be in the beef, you have to watch your back and have a watta. If you ain't with the shhh, don't try to be now. Stay up 'til next week.

-Cenious

From The Beat: Why do we read this same thing so often? The Beat wants some original thinking! Stop worrying about anyone else. We care about what you are planning with your own life, not what you think others should be doing with theirs. The idea that having a gun will protect you is another thing we read every week even though you know other young men who are no longer with us even though they were strapped. No, the protection you need can only come from your head, and we'd like to see a piece that shows that you're using yours! The "shhh" you are apparently so proud of is what put you here. No one can escape the consequences of their life's choices, so put that brain in gear and let's see what comes out the other end!

Livin' Out In The 'Hood

Man, dis ya boy, Vernon. Livin' in the 'hood is tough. Shootin' every night. People go to jail. Man, I got in the beef when I was twelve, because ninjas thought I was a soft young ninja, and I was not goin' for it, so I started bustin' my gun. Then I started robbing people and got locked. F

My PO told me he want me to change, but it ain't happenin'. He tried to move me out of my 'hood to a grouper; then I ran and went back to the 'hood. He said he want me out the beef, but I can't, 'cause it's go be someone you played or jumped that you go' bump heads wit'. I told my PO I'm not go' stop grindin' 'til ma casket drop.

-Vernon

From The Beat: So, is it bustin' a gun that makes someone tough? Any child can do that, so what's so "hard" about it? Some might even see it as a weakness that you have to rely on a weapon to measure who you are, rather than on the tools that you were born with, your hands and your brain! The only certain thing in life is change, so even though you believe you won't change, that is not possible. The only question is whether you are in control of that change or whether you hand that responsibility off to others.

Schools, Not Jails

If Obama made a phone call and said what would we need to make life better, one thing could be better schools. I do not believe kids are born violent because of their family and friends. The only way a kid could be violent is by showing them how to be violent, not because of the same blood.

I'm happy to have a black President, but I see that Barack Obama isn't helping to have more better schools. Instead Obama, is building more prisons and jails for people. But what I would do if I was President? I would build more schools instead of building more prisons.

-G Tooth

From The Beat: We agree with what we need, which is more education and fewer prisons. But both schools and prisons are part of the state's responsibility (the governor), not the federal responsibility (the president). Of course, he can send a powerful message, but building schools or prisons is not really in his power. Can we ask you a question, though: when you're on the outs, are you going to the school that's there for you? It doesn't matter how many schools we have if students aren't attending...

Violence

Where the violence come from depends where you live or who you kick it with. Like your friends be showin' you how to kill people or rob, or do some other violence. But Obama got to stop all this. Young people know violence from their families, like brother or video games.

-Omar

From The Beat: We agree that young people learn violence from what they see and what they're exposed to. But how can Obama stop it? What part can we play (you and us and everybody) in reducing the violence?

Fed Up

This the kid gettin' fed up with these walls
Same shhh e'ry day up in juvenile hall
Brothas talkin' hard but Yung Life make bodies fall
We don't soowuup, we dada doe call
Unit go bad, 'rybody gets on lockdown
Conditions is called, brothas gettin' slammed around
Je'ts gettin' thrown up, all you hear is the door sound
Brotha steady howlin', they on the streets bustin' rounds
Get from out these walls an' don't make a sound
Gettin' room time for stupid-ass shhh
Wasn't even involved, but I got 24 hours up in this ditch
E'ry mornin' gotta fold ma beddin' up
Same shhh e'ry day, that's why I'm gettin' fed up
Fed up Dada Doe

-Yung Von

From The Beat: It's a two-way street. You get fed up with the system's treatment of you — juvenile hall — and the system gets fed up with brothers "bustin' rounds" on the streets. We're guessing that you when you are really tired of this place, when you're truly fed up, you'll stop giving the system power over your life to put you here.

On My Way To A Grouper

What's up with The Beat? You know who this be. If not, my name is Yung Dri.

Anyways, what's up? Man, me? Nothing. Still in this thang, ready to get out this thang. I'm tired. I'm ready to go back home, but I can't. I have to go to a grouper and do six months. That phony as hell, though, but, hey! I rather go there than go to YA and do ten years and four months, so I'ma just handle my business, like my cousin said. Love you, cousin.

-Dri

From The Beat: Maybe the grouper won't be as "phony" as you expect. Maybe you'll meet new people you like, and learn some things about yourself and the world that you don't know now. Keep an open mind, and things will go a lot smoother than if you expect the worst. Good luck.

My Painful Life

All in my painful life
My mother neglected me all my life
I know she my mother
But she was not there for me
I have nine siblings
I went to a foster home
And then I went to my foster mother
She is my cousin
For three years I was happy
Now I am in jail

-Lissa

From The Beat: These things that caused you so much pain were outside your control, Lissa. But now you have some control of your life, so we hope you read as much as you can, learn as much as you can, and get as much education as you can. We wish you good luck with your case.

Back In This Hell Hole

What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Lil' Junk back in this place. But yeah, a ninja was out there doin' his thang. I'm 'bout to be missing the action 'cause I'm about to tuck my pumpkin. While I'm out there I'm gone stack ma dip and see what these females hollerin'. I'm on a whole 'nother hype when I touch down. If you ninjas think y'all big dawgs, then holla at me.

Lil' Junk new and improved get with the movement. What can I say. My pops got me this way. A ninja like me tired of these young ninjas acting like they with the shhh. Slow yo roll lil' dawg. Gone. I'm one of them ninjas.

-Lil' Junk

From The Beat: Keep doing "your thang" for the 'hood, Lil' Junk, and keep expecting the system to do its thang. It's time to connect the dots! The "new and improved" system waiting for the "new and improved" Lil' Junk. Your pops may have made you, but it's time for you to make yourself! That's what's called adulthood!

I'm Gettin' Sick Of Life

When life gets to be too much, I pop a pill, smoke a blunt, an' kill myself slowly. I'll neva kill myself, because there's always a chance that it can get better. I don't talk to God, 'cause he don't eva talk back. I don't talk to my mom about it, 'cause she don't understand my life.

My life is too much for one ninja, but fo' some reason, I still keep my ground. I got too much on my mind, an' always keep thoughts of the past with me — the people I've lost spiritually and physically. I can't even keep track of what I be stressin' ova. It's too much on my mind to stay focused on any one thing. But when I get on, I'ma get back on this, but I'm out.

-Cam

From The Beat: Maybe God is trying to talk to you, but you're not hearing it. Maybe every time you find yourself locked up for something you did, that's God talking. We're not saying that it is, only that it is possible. To be honest, Cam, you have more life in you than you realize, despite the burdens that are weighing you down. We wish we could offer you an easy way out of your stress, but, of course, nothing worth having is easy. Do you know any meditation techniques? Some people find meditation very useful when they have so much on their minds that they can't focus. You have a great spirit that animates you, keeps you in this world, and keeps you wanting to stay in this world. If you can tap into that spirit, you may be able to feel some of the weight lifting from your shoulders. Killing yourself, fast or slowly, doesn't seem to be working for you.

Remaking America

We the people of America must change for the good of ourselves, our communities and our country. Barack is now the face of America and his face is a nice peaceful one.

-Fro

From The Beat: This is a wonderful beginning, Fro, but you could do so much more with it. We don't like publishing one or two sentence pieces because they can't say what needs to be said. Can you take this piece and expand it to a page or more?

Almost Home

Wha's up ? What it do? This ya boy coming from the Ranch. I ain't wrote in a minute, but it all good, ya dig? I get out in three weeks, you feel me? I did this time and knocked it out. It was nothing, you feel me? Twelve months up here and out in three weeks. A'ight.

-T

From The Beat: Congratulations for almost completing your program! How do you think your family, your neighborhood, your homies will have changed when you get home? And what changes can they expect in you? When you say twelve months locked up is "nothing" we get worried, because it suggests you don't yet appreciate how precious your freedom is. Don't jeopardize it.

Another Week In Here

What's up with The Beat?

This ya boy, B-Reed.

They tryna make me do time for another whole week.

When I get out, I'ma have to stay cool and stand tall on my feet.

But I'ma be out and I'm sure I'ma get a whole lot of sleep.

Being in the halls could make a person flip out, but it gives me the creeps.

But when I'm out y'all know where I be

And y'all know where y'all could find me

But I'm in right now, so holla at me

In the unit where I be 'til I'm free

-B

From The Beat: Is it hard to sleep in here? We'd hate to be locked in this place, so we hope you hate it enough to hold onto your freedom when you walk out!

To A New Girl

Yeah man, this D-Mac. No, I still got my street in me, lol.

But about my new girl, you know she definitely the one.

Y'all all know I had to step it up for the '09. Come on man.

But you know she tryna hold the D-mac down up an' all around.

-D

From The Beat: We're happy for you that you have someone that's worth stepping it up for. (We had to take out the direct communication at the end.)

What's Coming?

Yo! What's up with The Beat? It C-Rider, I been down in YGC for seven months. I got my hearing in March. Hoping everything goes good. I'm hoping to beat my 707. Hoping to get out to my family and move on in my life. But while I'm in here I'm gonna keep handling my biz to the fullest. Trying to get my first girl ever.

-C

From The Beat: There's a lot of hoping in this piece. Let's say you get everything you hope for, then what? Besides getting your first girl (we can't put her name out there), what do you hope to accomplish with your freedom?

Obama

Obama brother, what's going on? I hope you doing what's expected. The white people still giving more time because of your black/white ass.

-Lil' Goo

From The Beat: We almost didn't publish this because we don't know what you're trying to say. Why not give a try to explain what you mean. What's "expected" of Obama by you? Which white people are giving who more time for what? Come on!

Finnah Dip Out This Place!

Chea, Beat. What's good? It's ya boy, Lil' Rob, up here at the Ranch, just chillin' and shhh! Well, I'm finnah dip up out this place. It's been a long journey. It's fifteen months down! Now it's finally over!

A'ight, then, Beat, this is the last time y'all finna hear from Lil' Rob. Touch down finally!

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: We hope you never see the inside of this, or any other place like this, Lil' Rob. But we also hope that this isn't the last time we hear from you. Write us when you get home and tell us how you're moving your life forward, and how each positive step away from here takes you closer to your goals. We appreciate what you've written for The Beat over these last months. Thank you.

The Street Is Part Of Me

I'm not proud of some of my choices in the past, but what can I do 'bout it? Shhh, it's the past...

A lot peoples want take me out from the streets. Ha ha, ninja, street is part me. I want to see you try! Anyway, I'm still looking forward for my future. Hope to be free soon!

-Free Me

From The Beat: Like we said, you can't just wait for the President to make changes if you're not going to make some on your own. You will be free soon, but then what? If you plan to do the same things as before, you'll find the same consequences. Don't let the President or yourself down.

Getting Away

Life in this shhh really crazy, for real. People ain't solid. These dudes nowadays will tell on a squad killer real quick. People act like a ninja snitchin' ain't a bad thang. To me, that ninja just broke the most important rule and that's not telling. When a person send the next ninja away because he too scared of the time, he need to think hard about it. Anybody I catch telling on one of mine, I'm gone deal with dude personally.

-Shotty

From The Beat: Can you see why responsible adults might find the "squad killer" someone to stop, someone to keep away from others, or is the thing you do, no matter how bad, never as bad as saying what you did? You can yell about snitches 'til the cows come home, but that's not going to stop snitching. If there were no snitches, the entire criminal justice system would collapse, from juvenile hall to death row, and nobody in the system is going to let that happen. So, there's really only one solution to your problem, which is to stop giving others power over you that they can trade for their own benefit. If you keep doing dirt, count on someone cashing in on the information.

Exercising In The Rain

Rainy cold day
Just came from the class
It's raining outside
They're tryna made us exercise
So heartless and cruel
We are not wild animals
So I'm writing this to The Beat
So I won't get docked
Don't come to the Ranch
If you don't want to exercise

-Sunkist

From The Beat: There are a lot worse things than exercising in the rain, so think "heartless and cruel" are slight exaggerations! Why don't you just surrender to it, and enjoy the drops bouncing off your face? You'll dry soon.

College Bound

What's really good with The Beat, though? Britt-B speakin' on behalf of all the people locked up for some dumb stuff. Mayne, I know I'm tired of looking at these same four walls and wearing these same purple and khaki outfits. If I could go back to the day I went down, I would have neva made the same decisions...

I gots to stay away from the drama, 'cause we got a new black President, Barack Obama. I'm not no sucka, please believe me, but I'm tryna stay focused and not let these hatas displese me. I'm college-bound, 'cause that's my goal. Like, my baby daddy, Lil' Wayne said, "I know my role."

-Britt

From The Beat: What is your plan for getting from here to that goal of college? What do you have to do first, etc. (and what do you have to stop doing first, etc.)? What would you like to study in college? What do you want to do with the education you get?

Words

Since I've been behind the wall, people have been assassinating my character, kicking dirt on my name, and I'm not around to wipe or clean it off. Behind these words from others' tongue, I've lost one of the most important females in my life (Grams and Moms come before her). People have placed thoughts in her mind that I was cheating in her before I got locked up (which is fasholy not true). So she pulled the trigger and shot me in the back while I'm already on the ground, face down. Since I'm here, I know it's not too much I can do. So I'll ask The Beat this: what's a man to do?

Ya boy turned 18 on Jan. 17, just to put it out there for the record. So I'm shouting myself out.

-Ballard

From The Beat: Well, happy birthday you old man! Sorry that your girl believed lies about you, but all successful relationships are built on trust, so if she didn't trust you enough to know they were lying, then maybe she wasn't the girl for you anyway.

W'asup Wit' Cha

Man, they done grabbed a young thug again, but it's smooth. I'm just chillin' like we say on tha block. Chea though, they can't hold a goon foreva. I go to court on Friday and I'm hoping they let me go. If they do, I'm see my baby mama. She laughing at me, but she know w'as up when I touch down. I ain't missing shhh though. All I was doin' was holdin' the block down, somethin' tough. Yeah, the gang movement gettin' shut down.

-Top Ranka

From The Beat: We don't get the "they can't hold a goon foreva" sentiment. First, it's just wrong! More than 200 people who committed crimes under the age of 18 are serving life in prison without parole in California alone. But even if it was true, why would you be cool with giving any of your life away to a bunch of strangers who tell you when to talk, what to wear, who to shower with, what to eat, etc? Never mind about forever; stop giving your freedom away even for a day!

Congratulations, Obama!

Congratulation to new president, Barack H. Obama...

I believe in him. I believe he can make change that America desperately need to be changed. I believe he can make changes of something I can be proud of, being an American. I believe he can solve the economic problem we having right now. In his Inaugural speech, he said more jobs will be open and spend less money on the war. I really like that.

That's all I can say right now about him. Ha ha. I still think Obama should hook me up and free me...

-Free Me

From The Beat: One thing for sure, the new President has already brought a lot of hope that the last president crushed! We hope that your belief in the changes he can bring will also lead you to make some changes yourself, without waiting for him. After all, one man can't do it all by himself. He needs you, too.

Read 'Em Before You Mess Wit' 'Em

Man I'm sick of these females hollerin' hella bullshh, hella lies. Shhh that will get a ninja killed in a heart beat rumors. Lies, sayin' somebody got killed and really they locked up or at the house got ninjas stressin' for no reason. But I ain't trippin'. Like pops said, don't mess with females before you read 'em. So if female hollerin' that bullshhh, they to the curb. I focus on gettin' my dough. Man.

-Pancho

From The Beat: Forget the females and the doughty and start focusing on your education. It lasts longer than both!

Letter to The President

Dear Obama,

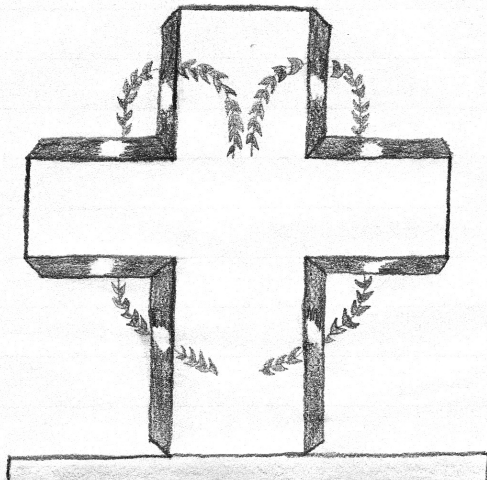
I am glad you are our president. I hope you change a lot of stuff for example, the economy, global warming. I heard some other stuff.

But anyways, my name is Ceaser, I'm from California, that's off the subject. I hope you take off the Three Strikes Law then make weed legal. If not, then I know you're going to do something for the world.

So thank you for your time, President, have a good time in office. And believe me, when I'm able to vote 4 years, I'm going to vote for you. And I hope you are in the office for the next 8 years.

-Ceaser

From The Beat: Why do you think President Obama should change the Three Strikes Law and make marijuana legal? Do you think you could come up with a detailed explanation about why you think these things should change?



What I Hope

Q-vole Beat? Well I'm writing to this vato the new and first African American president. Well I hope this guy Obama makes good changes and help the Mexican people out.

-L

From The Beat: We hope so as well. Speaking of changing, what are yours?

Where Violence Comes From

Where I think violence comes from? I think it is just human nature because like when people get mad, they act in a way that wants to hurt people.

Also, when you get mad, you don't really think about things before doing them, you just do it. So that is how violence happens.

I also think violence happens when people can't get good affordable jobs and live in frustrated lives, like not being able to pay for things you need in a house, so that's how a lot of people end up being dealers and doing other things to get money. A lot of violence comes from money.

-Thoughts On Violence

From The Beat: Can you relate to the examples you gave on how violence is created? Are you one of those who get mad, and act without thinking of what the consequences may be? You gave us good examples of what are the causes that creates violence, what about some solutions? Do you any in mind that we can use to reduce violence in our world?

Words And Pictures

I have no words, to speak about words.

But painting a picture is easier to observe.

Words are powerful, but so is visual

Words end up forgotten for this individual.

Life it self could be one big photo

Other then life in a book, that I'd one day let go

A picture in my mind that I could always look at

Alone speaks a million words, so I'd stick to Kodak

Words become misinterpreted and people become

Offended while a pic' depends on the viewer and what he or she comprehended.

-Jon Jon

From The Beat: Yes, every picture tells a story don't it? WE all interpret the pictures differently too. AS for words we find them equally important, especially given the power they hold where you sit tonight, be it the letters you write, or the paperwork the courts deal with on the daily.

Thanking The President

I would like to thank the president for everything. He has already changed a lot of people. I would really like you to come to San Jose. I think it's great that we finally have a black president. Thank you for changing the world.

-Javaris

From The Beat: Through your point of you, how has he changed the world? We know what you mean though.

Words, Hmmm

What's cracking? The topic this week is on words. Words to me honestly ain't shhh. But when someone says some shhh that's offensive to me or the homeboys then that persons gonna get fudged up.

-Cp

From The Beat: You can't walk away? You have to get violent over words? Why is that?

Violence: Nature Or Nurture?

In my opinion, I believe that both violence & non-violence can make a difference.

For example, in Durango, Mexico, the drug cartels in most cities in that state have taken over the cops. They have kidnapped & murdered many of them.

I believe they had made their point clear to let everybody know they run things.

-A violent example

From The Beat: What do you think the people in the cities think of the drug cartels taking over? Do you think the cities here will ever come to a point where the gangs become the law and the police have been driven away?

My Letter

Dear President of The United States,

What are your plans and thought towards immigration? What would you do to make it different? Are you against immigration or for it? Are you going to help the immigration?

I think you should help immigration because people want to get a job and have a better future for there children.

-Sergio

From The Beat: These are some great questions to ask President Obama! Maybe you could come up with an argument of why Obama should support immigration?

Dear Mr. Obama

I am glad you are our new president! I was happy when you got elected and some people think you will fail but they don't mean anything! You are going to succeed and no matter what I am going to think and pray and hope everything will go well.

Just try to achieve something and think about what you trying to achieve and you will. No matter what I will always think that you are going to make a change and you should change the economy so the messed up system would release people like me.

Sincerely...

-Bryon

From The Beat: This is a great inspirational letter to The Leader of Our Country. You seem to have a lot of faith and some pretty high expectations for Mr. Obama. What is it about him that makes you have your expectations so high? Does Obama give you hope and inspiration that there will be significant change to the way not only the economy but the direction our country is going?

In My Prayers

Hey Beat! Well, happy news to you all. Well, I just want to write a couple of linias to let you know that I haven't talked to any of my family in about a month, almost two. So yeah, there's only one person who's been writing me, and that's my girl. So yeah, I try not to cry, but it's hard to not think about your familia. So stay up. Everyone's always in my prayer. Much love and respect.

-Malae

From The Beat: And you're in our prayers, too, Malae. One of the worst things about giving up your freedom, even for a short time, is that life on the outside goes on without you. Don't forget that painful lesson when you touch down so that you never have to shed these tears again.

My Loss

I'm not really feelin' the topics today, so I'm going to write about what's on my mind. Someone in my family died a few days ago. It got me hella upset. It also got me worried about my mom because I know it hurt her a lot to see that person die.

Well I just hope my PO lets me get a OT to spend time with my family for a few hour well that's all I have for today's writing.

-Mark

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. We hope you get that OT. Your family needs you so much. Make an effort to get out and stay with your family at all times, like this one.

Violent Acts

I think violent thoughts or tendencies are committed by those who are weak-minded, and are afraid of reality or the thoughts of perfection.

King Phillip II said something like "Perfection is only possible to those who can see beyond their own blindness." I think this is a powerful message to those who are lost.

Another quote, I think means something of similarity, is a couple meaningful words Sun Tzu said is: "To use weapons of hate, torture or pain is the cause of a man driven joy ill omen."

-Cody

From The Beat: Why do you think people commit violent acts nowadays. There are reasons why people do things, and you're right maybe because they're scared, and it doesn't necessarily mean they're weak-minded. Sometimes people's reactions are different because of the environment they were raised in, and some of us were taught things that we shouldn't have been taught. But as we get older we start distinguishing right from wrong and it's up to us to make the correct decisions.

Chased

Few years ago, I got chased by two cars with guns. so I got scared and I started to run down a hill. The guys got out of the car. I was getting chased so I ran to my friend's house...

-Fernando

From The Beat: Damn that sounds scary ass hell! Why do you think those guys were after you? Do you think they mistook you for somebody else?

A Letter To The President

It's amazing that an African American can run for president just 50 years ago they wouldn't be able to drink from the same fountain as a white. But now you kick down a lot of doors in not just America but the world.

I believe you will make America a better place with terrorist, drugs, and get violence out the way. I believe in you and what you can do with your chair in presidency. Well good luck with being President.

-Lil' Dreamer

From The Beat: That's a good point about not only kicking down doors in the USA but all over the world. This is history and all the petty differences that we creative amongst ourselves can only be taken down by us. So it's up to us to kick down doors and be more open minded to all the different cultures and people that are around us.

Good-Bye, Beat!

Hey Beat readers. Jacklyn hea once again for the last time. I'm finally being released on the 18th. Yeah baby! Four and a half months, and I'm finally bouncin', goin' to a group home. But it's good I'm out! Hecka sick birthday present!

I'll miss you Beat! You really made Thursdays exciting for me. Ha ha! Well, yea, no more locked doors. Ha ha! See ya Beat! Xoxo

-Jacklyn

From The Beat: Congratulations, Jacklyn. We hope when you see us, it's out there and not in here! By the way, this doesn't have to be your good-bye piece. Even when you're out there moving forward with your life, you can always write to The Beat and we will always publish it! Good luck.

A Letter To The President

I would probably tell him to go through with legalizing weed. The second thing would probably be to start making the economy better. So they will start releasing people.

They're keeping people detained because the economy is messed up right now. So they're keeping people so they could make money.

-David

From The Beat: You're probably right, they're probably keeping people detained to make some money. But also you have to not let them take your freedom away. How can you do that? By not putting yourself in positions where you have to break the law.

All I Know

They say people learn violence but I was born with it. Through out my life I was always seeing violence as a child. That's why I'm here because that's what I know and nothing more then violence and anger.

-Chincz

From The Beat: We can understand that sometimes you're raised up in a violent environment and that's the only way you know how to act. But as you grow up you can learn how to act a different way. Obviously your violent angry ways can land you in jail so you know those are the ways you're trying to avoid. There are other ways to deal with your anger besides violence, and that way you don't have to jeopardize your freedom. It's your choice.

I Don't Belong Here

What's up Beat? I ain't feeling any of these topics, so I'm gonna tell you a lil' something about my criminal mind. Sometimes I feel like I don't belong in the hall, but if I was in the outs, I would have been catching more cases besides my 2-11 and 2-45.

I got a few months life skills, but I ain't tripping. I'll be out soon in my 'hood not slipping up to no good, you feel me. And other times, I feel like I belong here for the fact that it ain't nada to a criminal minded.

-Mopfin

From The Beat: You are lucky to get that program after all the mess you've caused. But, it seems like you haven't gotten the point of what brings you back in here. You mentality is what will always bring you back in here. If you don't change it, you will always be part of a hold up from the system.

See Ya Later

This is that one homie, just posted in this hell with two more months left. By the time this is even in the Beat I will already be out. So to all stay up there's a saying that I heard today and I like it. It goes like this, "death before dishonor."

-Animal

From The Beat: We hope you had made this saying cleared to us, the meaning of it.

Por Vida

Que onda, Beat? How you guys doin'? Well, this is that solid-ass por vida soldado (soldier for life), Littles, comin' at you from the max — not the imitator, but the real "porvideoso."

Today, I would like to rap a little about my situation. First off, I'm locked up for a pc 211 (robbery). I've been down for seven and a half months now. So I took my case to trial 'cause these K-9s weren't offering a homeboy any kind a deal. So I went to trial. And I lost. They found me guilty, an' I get sentenced on the 26th of January.

But check this out, these foo's are sentencing me with 12 years! One strike! Crazy shhh, huh? You know I never thought I would be doin' tiempo like this, especially for a robbery. These punks dropped that Proposition 21 on me, plus gun enhancement. They tryin' to have my ass hauled off.

The good thing is I got hella support from my familia, my 'hood, and most of all, I got a good, strong stable mente (mind). You know I'm looked upon as a solid street soldier and I am, don't get it twisted! But my scenery is changing. I ain't going to be on the streets for at least ten years. I'm going to be putting it down behind the walls. So I guess what I'm trying to say is this: "porvideoso" ain't ever going to change. It's por vida till the end of time. The only thing that has changed is a solid individual like myself getting taken off these San Jo' streets an' getting stationed behind the walls.

Well, I got two months till I leave to county. To all my comrades and solid homies, stay up. This soldier for life is out. "Another Day Gone is Another Day Strong..."

-Telly

From The Beat: So let's see if we've got this right, Telly. You robbed somebody, took your case to trial, lost and got sentenced to state prison for twelve years at this young age, but THEY are fools? The only positive we can make out of that is that maybe some other youngster will read it, and see that losing twelve years out of your life isn't worth it! As for promising never to change, that's just more blindness. Change is a certainty; it's only what kind of change and who will be directing it, you or someone else. We do feel sorry that you will have to spend time in the cesspool of our adult prison system, but we hope all who read this understand the consequences.

Dear Barak Obama

My name is Tristan, I'm from New York City. I came to San Jose at a very young age. The mentality that I have had for the past 5 years barely changed.

Right now I'm 17 turning 18, I feel that your inauguration helps me see that there is no more excuses. There's a minority in the white house!

All my life I thought the streets was the only way for me, that quick money, hella girls on me, and smoking trees. I thought that was life, that's all there was to it.

But keep it real I want to change, like Obama's campaign was about "change". Right now I'm currently attending school. I have 185 credits. I should graduate high school in like March. Honestly, high school was never a problem.

Now when I get released, I'm going to attend Evergreen Junior College, get an associate degree and move on. This is some lil' kid shhh. I'm a grown ass man and it's time to start acting like it.

-Tristin

From The Beat: That's the spirit we like to read from you. You're right! It's time for you to start acting like a young man. Get your education, get your life back on track and start living life like you're supposed to.

Violence Is Normal

Que Onda Beat! This is your homie Chino once again. I think that violence it's normal because I grew up where every body it's crazy and don't really care about a thing. So that's why I think I am like this.

-Chino

From The Beat: So, you're saying that you're life would be a different if you had been raised in a different environment?

In This Hell

Check this out Beat. This yo' boy Dre back at it again. But shhh I'm up in this hall tryin' above C level, but other that they tryin' to play me like a lil Atari every time I'm in this hall. You feel me? This system is messed up.

I hope Obama is going to help us out because out here shhh is getting hectic for yo' boy. I'm in this hell because people be hattin'.

-Dre

From The Beat: Through the way you express yourself, we can see why you're in this situation. Are you sure it's the system that got you held up in here? Or is it the way you're handling things?

On My Mind

What's good Beat? Your boy Mousie, writing what's on my mind. I've been here for a couple months now, but it ain't nothing to me. Some detectives trying to bust me for some dumb stuff that went down, and people pointing to me. Now they waiting 'til I'm 16 and they gonna give me a strike if I get convicted - for stuff I didn't do.

I'm sick of people running their mouths about stuff they don't know, just to save their own selves. They can't handle the time and think they're playing the system, but end up playing their homies. It's bull. Anyway, I'm out.

-Mousie

From The Beat: You can't control what other people choose to do. It's obviously difficult enough to try to control your own behavior. You say 2 months "ain't nothing". Well, what does matter to you, if your own freedom doesn't? What do you care deeply about? Acting tough is easier than doing the hard work that could turn your life around and make you deservedly proud of yourself. That's the kind of work that would make your family proud, too. We ask you to consider focusing your energy on your own life. Ask yourself hard questions. And respond honestly. That's the beginning of a life you can be proud of.

Eventually You'll Push Back

No, I do not think nonviolence as modeled by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. can be made more than violence. I think violence can come from anybody. Someone just has to keep on pushing him or her around and sooner or later they will fight back.

No, I do not think people are born violent. No one is born a sav. They are made into a sav. People probably resort to violence because they grew up around it at a young age, so they think it is ok when their role model in life are violent person and I feared by all.

So they want to be just like him and impress him by fighting. Or they just want to make people fall at his feet. Well I have to go Beat, late.

-The one and only Monkey

From The Beat: Do you consider yourself being violent? If so, are you a person whose become violent due to violence that you've experienced in your surroundings? Can you think of a solution that can eliminate violence?

Violent Tendencies

What up Beat! This would be Sneaks. Well in what topic I'm gonna speak mind about is violence.

Violent people are sometimes that way 'cause of the way they where raised or the people they were raised around. And others are violent 'cause outside forces.

Outside forces for me are friends, family, rivals and many others. It may or not relate to this, but I think the violence I have is because the anger I hold for them enemies, the anger I hold for the father who hasn't been there for me, and the anger I hold for them messed up cops.

Cops are cool, but other cops are racial profiling just because the color of skin, clothing or the style of clothing; when they should be messing with them chomos (child molesters), people who are stealing, and them tweakers. But, the hell with them cops.

The family, well my dad and mom use to fight in front of me and that was because my pops was always drunk. Well he got deported and ever since then he didn't try to call or write us. For get him.

-Sneaks

From The Beats: It's obvious that you've lived a uncontrollable life ever since you were very young. But, that's the past. You're no longer a child anymore. You have everything in life and you're capable of making a better choices to take you to a better life. You need to find a way to let go of that hate you've been caring. OK, we understand that you didn't have father there for you, rivals hurting yours and vice-versa, cops always intervening; however, you still here, alive and got everything you need to change your life around. Drop it and move on with life. Mature up!

Dear President, Barak Obama

Ever since I was a child, I have seen and heard of racism in America. But people like you give me hope. I hope that your presidency changes people's perspective about minorities in the years to come.

Because my incarceration, I was attending a school called CCOC in San Jose, California. I was taking backing and catering and I was also the student body president. Although I have made some major mistakes, I still have hope. For you have proved that no matter the challenges you're up against. Any goal you have can be achieved if you put your mind to it.

-Dit

From The Beat: It seems like you had it going on in high school. What happened? If you were the student body president in school, that shows how smart you are. What's your plan?

My Dad

I wish I was on the out's because I need to be with my family especially my Dad. My dad is very sick and he needs me to step up as a man and take his responsibility for my family. Pretty soon, I might not have a dad now, but I need to face my fear and step up and do what's right.

Well stay up Beat and face your biggest fear.

-Lil' Green Eyes

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear this. It must have been hard to have this in mind all the time. Be with him. Make his last days happy and full of pride, happiness and love. He and your family need your support. So do what's right! Stop being selfish!

Talking About Violence

What's cracking? It's this Troubles from Gilroy once again. Well on tonight's topic about violence, I don't think people are born violent we become violent.

We react out of anger and it results in violence. Most people don't think about it. They just do it and afterwards they regret it!

Also some people may see nothing, but violence through out their whole lives. They just do what they see. That's all I got for now. So till next time. This abstract minded vato is gone.

-Rancho

From The Beat: Are you one of those people who would do something and regret it later? Do you have an idea on how we can't get rid of violence once for all?

Update

Warm greetings once again. It's that Pachuko also known as chuko. Where should I start? On Monday, I got the words that I'm going down to a Youth Alternative in Southern California by San Diego, that's if they except me to the program.

Ain't that something? I am from San Jose going to Southern California Well I have court this Friday 23rd and that's when I find out if I get excepted to the program.

Well to all the locked down in the regular units, just remember you have an exit date to those in the max keep your heads up one love.

- Pachuko

From The Beat: What are your plans if you get accepted in that program? Are you going to follow it through? Maybe a new environment can make a difference. Use this chance to fix your life. This might be it.

Mom

What up Beat? Well it' that homie coming out this unit. I just got transferred here from another unit. It's good to be here that unit was getting hella wack!

Well today I'ma talk about my mom because she motivates me to get through this time. I am proud of her because a couple years ago, she wasn't in the right state of mind. She was always doing drugs and all of a sudden she started to get her shhh together. She finally snapped out of it and she started taking responsibility to take care of my little brother and sister 'cause she was always gone doing her thing.

Now to this day she has a job and she's doing good and also taking care of my little brothers and sisters. Well that's it for now Beat until next week.

-The Son

From The Beat: Great for your mom. We're glad things at home are getting better for your family. You got a perfect example at home that shows that a change is possible. Now, you're the one who needs to make a difference in your life, home and in your family. We're proud of your mother. Quitting a bad habit such as drugs is really hard and it requires a lot of support. Yours!

Powerful Words

Words affect you in one of the strongest ways.
If they are hard, they affect you mentally.
They do not hurt you physically,
but they go deeper inside of you and punish you
in your mind.
If they are good they can activate something inside of you
that thought you never had.
Words unlock different chambers of your mind
and allow you to raise or sink your ego.
Words can take you higher than the sky
and let explore the unknown
in order for your mind to grow
and become what you want it to be.

-Matias

From The Beat: Yes, words are magical for better or for worse. Thank goodness for words! Every thing starts with words!

To Mr. President

What's up Mr. President?
I just want to say you're the coolest guy ever because
there is going to be change. It might not happen soon,
but I know it's going to happen and you let everyone else
know that they can be a president no matter what color
they are. Until next time Mr. President.

-Young Uso

From The Beat: Will there be a change in your life as well? What are you thinking of changing?

A Better Place

To me remaking America means fixing our economy and
providing more jobs for our people. It also mean giving us
a better and affordable education.

-David

From The Beat: How should this happen?

Words

Words are very powerful. It could determine your
emotions, sad, mad, or happy. It could also have strong
feeling like the simple few letter word that is really hard
to express (love).

Another that is easy to say, but can cause a lot a
damage and hurt someone is the word hate. Well that
what I wanted to say word are very powerful.

-Paul

From The Beat: Nice expression! How do you relate to those hard saying words? Have you ever used them towards someone? Who? If so, are you glad to say it or do you regret saying them?

Them Words

What is crackin Beat readers? This is the homeboy Shrek
coming from the max unit. Still here waiting to bounce.

Today I'm going to write about the topic "words",
words are no joke they are very powerful. They can get
someone killed, beat up, stabbed, shot etc. or they can
hurt someone's feelings. For example the B-word could
get you slapped and so on and so forth. The word "hate"
can offend someone also. All I'm trying to say is watch
out how and who you talk to. Because one person might
not trip, but the next person might. Well I'm out one love.
Stay up...

-Shrek

From The Beat: That's why we always have to be careful when we are shooting from the hip in conversation, 'cause not everyone relates the same.

Time

Time goes on and on
It doesn't wait, it doesn't slow,
It doesn't replay, it just flows.
Time goes on and on
When you miss out, there is no rewind
But never lose hope, never decline
'Cause time goes on and on.
Sometime we forget what we have in life,
Sometimes we just let things slip out of sight
But time goes on and on.
Life is precious so stay afloat
There's always good, no reason to mope,
Times goes on and on.
Don't get left behind, don't live in the past
Because the good moments I've had I know they here to
last...
Time goes on and on

-Cisco

From The Beat: Wow, what a great and true poem! We know that The Beat readers will find inspiration in this piece, as did we. We look forward to reading more of your pieces and we look forward to reading what you write after you're released.

Violence

Some people are born in certain household ways. Like
how your parents acted or your neighborhood. Your brain
is like a sponge.

Some people grow up to be violent by the people you
hang out with, which affects your life.

-Not Sponge Bob

From The Beat: You're right, our brains are like sponges. What do you think parents can do for their kids to protect them from picking up things that aren't necessarily good, like fighting or stealing?

Angel De Mi Vida

What's up Beat? This is Chino from Sunnyvale once
again. Well this poem is for that special someone, she
knows who she is.

(Intro)

You're my angel (You're my angel)
I need you (and I need you)
You're my angel (You're my angel)
Sent from up above...
You're the angel de mi vida (my life)
sent from above,
I never thought this pandillero (gangster) could ever find
love,
when we met I though gang-banging was my life
and that was my destino (destiny)
but then you came into my life
and gave this chino to cariño (caress),
you made me realized that a good jainas (girls) are hard
to find
by taking a chance on me
with the fire in his eyes.
So please don't do me wrong mija (girl)
you know that you're my wife,
or I will turn into the devil and gun powder will ignite.

(Chorus) Angel de en mi Vida

We are always gonna be together 'cause I need you in my
life.

-Chino

From The Beat: Nice! We like this poem. We hope she gets your message as well, and that you start living life that won't jeopardize your freedom!

Violence Is Evil

Violence, it's one of them evil ass words. When I think of that word I have flashes of people doing crimes and people forcing others to do things that they don't want to do.

I think violence comes from family traits and it's natural but when people get more into society meaning TV, friends, neighborhoods, etc. and that level of violence rises and some people learn violence when they get abused or bullied.

Others learn violence from street gangs and little kids see that and they think that's the way they should behave in the society. There are many ways people learn violence. I learned my violence the way I was raised and the hood I live at.

Well, my time is short so I am going to end by saying, until pencil meets paper.

-Bin Laden

From The Beat: Why do you think society thinks it's okay to show violence on TV and in movies and music but when people are faced with actual violence coming out the hood then they don't know how to handle the situation? Do you think if violence in entertainment was discouraged then the violence in our neighborhoods would cease to exist? Do you disagree?

Violence

Well Beat, I don't know if anybody is born violent. All I do know is I was taught to be violent or be known as a sucka.

I don't know but that's what everybody in my hood was taught, if anybody gives you shhh just smash on them. I guess that's just how every Californian gangster is raised.

-Izzy

From The Beat: It sucks when your only two choices in your neighborhood is to fight or be a punk. We're forced to fight for our place in our neighborhoods and it shouldn't be this way. What do you think you can do in your neighborhood to change this fact?

Convincing Words

What's up Beat? This week's topic is words. Words can mean a lot and they can also not mean shhh. Words can be very powerful.

Obama uses very powerful words. Words that make people believe he's going to be good president. Words can lead to good and bad things. Well that's all for now till next week.

-Mv

From The Beat: When have you used words for your convenience? Can you think about time when you said some of those powerful words that convinced someone and that person agreed with your speech?

To Obama

I would like to say to President Barack Obama, "I think that it's great that we finally have a black president, but what are you going to do for all of these black communities in San Francisco like Fillmore or Hunters Point? Come visit us for once, get San Francisco back alive.

I heard that you came to the Fillmore District, but I know you can come to the other side too, and get some of these crack heads off the streets and in to some program, so they can do something in their lives instead of getting high.

-Reggie

From The Beat: We hope he gets your message. In reality, there are a lot of things that need to be changed to make this place better. The question is, "are you willing to cooperate in changing your community? Little by little, a difference can be made. Do you part?

My Letter to The President

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Keymonte, but that's beyond the point.

If I would have been 18 at the time, of course I would have voted for you, but I wasn't and my mom voted for you and step dad.

Sir, I really hope you can change America and save us 'cause we aren't doing that great and even the people that voted for you are kinda doubting you can change America. They say it's too much of a load for you, so I'm done arguing with them.

So please make a change and play your cards right. Also, I'm African American so I hope you don't think I like you 'cause of that, I agree with a lot of your thoughts.

-Keymonte

From The Beat: This is a great letter, Keymonte, we hope that President Obama is able to hear our voices (unlike our last President) and see what we really need. Remember, you too have to play a part in change!!

To The Good President

Dear Obama,

I think you are going to be a good president. At first, I didn't realize that you becoming president was that big an idea, but now I realize that it is 'cause you gone through a lot to become president.

On top of that you made history 'cause you are the first black president. Congrats!

-Obama Believer

From The Beat: We're sure that Obama will greatly appreciate this letter.

To The Beat

What up Beat? This is your boy Jose from the hall. Well I've been in here for two months, but I had court today and I'm going to advent for 90 days.

I'm a try to change my life, finish probation and try not to come back.

That's all for now Beat lates.

-Jose

From The Beat: Good luck and we hope you get to achieve all your plans for a better tomorrow for you and your future. Think about getting an education as well. It's really important.

It's A Risk For A Thug

What's up, Beat? This is Lazy, I'm firme off these topics so I'm going to write about the risks a gangster or a thug take's on the daily basis, so here I go.

For the gangsters, they take a risk everyday because of what they rep and the color they love. Also, they gotta watch out for the cop's because the cop's hate on a bald headed Mexican and that's right, when do you ever see them hate on the opposite side of a Mexican?

For them thugs, like me and my homies, we risk everything from freedom to our lives because we love to steal. It's addicting, if I come across an open car or a wallet on a table it's mine. I risk it, no joke. If it has to do with money and thieving I'm there, that's right, I'm there.

Well Beat, place me up, don't hate. I'm out for now much love.

-Lazy

From The Beat: Why do you think you steal? Wouldn't it be more satisfying to get your money and cars legitimately? If you got your things legitimately then you wouldn't end up in the halls for it. There's much more to life than a gangsta or thug lifestyle, don't limit yourself to a life that's already limiting in the first place.

"She Got It"

Verse 1:

Shorty knows she got it, she got it out of all them other girls.

She be the flyest, quit being foolish and ride with the tightest

'Cause I'm a Titan sittin' in the drop top with the nicest.

Shorty knows in life I'll take her the furthest.

My lyrics always come out the hardest

But haters hate, that's why they talk their shhh

But I'll love you no matter what regardless

And I won't do you wrong baby I promise.

Our love will proceed only with progress

So who the Hell care about all that gossip?

Can't understand them anyways 'cause they talk in gibberish.

Shorty, let me take you to my world where we'll live lavish.

Baby, I've never heard of the word expensive

'Cause everything to me in life is priceless.

Shorty, get with me go ahead and take the risk

I'm so addicted to you like a fiend is to narcotics.

Now don't you think that's a little ironic?

Jump in the jet so we can fly super sonic.

My sexual desire for you is so erotic,

Your body so beautiful it's hypnotic

And shorty knows she got it she got it.

Chorus:

Shorty I love the way you shakin' them hips

Shorty I love the way you lickin' them lips

Shorty love's the way I be droppin' them hits

Shorty get with me we out let's dip...

Verse 2:

Shorty know she got it, she got it.

She's fine, a dime piece 10 out of 10

Ride or die chick to the very end.

Our love is true, there's no equivalent

We'll last forever I'm so confident.

You know jealousy got suckas talking but they ignorant

I ignore them 'cause they speakin' irrelevant.

What a hater says is never important

Disrespectful, yup, they're so insolent.

Shorty the only thing I got in this life of sin,

When she's not by my side she got me thinkin'.

This girl is everything I represent

Go ahead and quote anyone of my statements

You know I tell the truth it's so evident.

The whole world is my testament

This love is real, I ain't got to pretend.

Shorty's been with me through thick and thin

And she's more then just a girlfriend.

Without you my love is so immanent

And shorty knows she got it, she got it.

Chorus:

Shorty I love the way you shakin' them hips

Shorty I love the way you lickin' them lips

Shorty love the way I be droppin' them hips

Shorty get with me we out let's dip

Verse 3:

Shorty knows she got it, she got it.

Shorty, you just don't know the things you do to me.

Don't be blind open up your eyes so you can see

That you're the only one that I want and need.

So baby, swear to me that you'll never leave

'Cause I think I'll go crazy if you did.

Mentally, you're the only who makes my heart skip a beat

Just by the way that you kiss me

And I ain't bein' soft because everybody bleeds

And right now I'm bleeding out the love for you and me.

But damn this shhh too good to believe,

I must be stuck in some kind of dream.

Shorty, wake me up from my fantasy.

Shorty, bring me back to reality,

'Cause you know love couldn't hide or cover up these streets.

They're corrupt and they'll kill you by any means

But I try to cope with all this insanity.

I use to drug myself up with coke and weed,

Used to take me to another world, it used to help me

But now I got a new drug and it's love.

Lil' shorty is my everything, my everything

Shorty knows she got it, she got it, she got me, she got me.

-Chico

From The Beat: What a piece Chico! Maybe you can channel everything you've been through, through your music? Instead of getting in trouble again once you get out why don't you focus on your music?

To My Lady

As the days goes by

I think about the better times

that we spent together,

me and you forever,

as I dream of the past,

I knew that they weren't going to last,

but I stood by you 'cause I already know that I love you forever and ever.

But ever turns into never

even though you already know that I want you by my side

'cause them lonely nights

just ain't feeling right,

girl just know that I need you.

-J

From The Beat: How do you know it wasn't going to last? Well, you know what you need to do to get her back? Being here, won't help you at all.

If I Had a Perfect Life

What's up Beat? I am going to write about a perfect life.

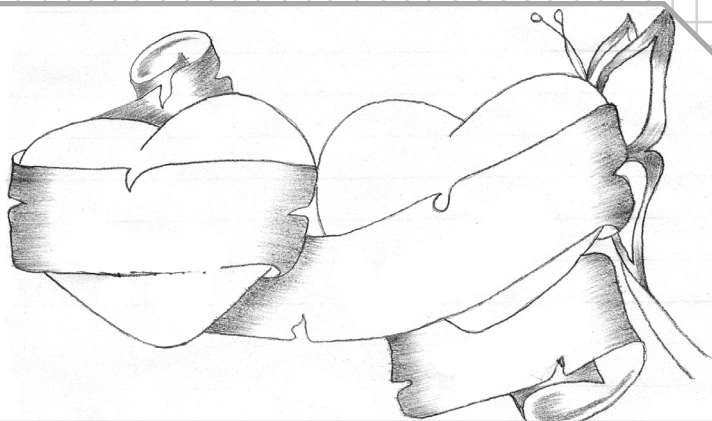
If I had a perfect life with my family most of my life I would have a perfect life because they are always there for you when you need them they are there.

If you need a friend or a homeboy they are not always around to help you but your family will be there for you through every step of your life.

Your homeboy will only help you mess up your life and help you pick the wrong way down the road and in the juvenile hall or to jail and to your death because you listened to them and they make your choices for you.

-Justin

From The Beat: This is so true. There is a big difference between a friend and homie. A friend will try and lead you on the right track and a homie? A homie doesn't give a shhh about what happens to you, s/he might write to you while you're locked up but when you get out what does that same homie do? S/he tries to get you to smoke or drink or do something that could get you back in the hall. A real friend would never do that because they would respect your freedom.



Time ticking away

First off, Is your time ticking away? Because mine is, I've been to this juvenile detention center too many times. All I'm doing is watching my life pass by, looking through the foggy, tagged window wishing I could get out.

It seems you don't wanna change, or realize you wanna change until you're locked up, and the worst thing is when you don't know when you're getting out. So you just stay at the correctional facility until your time comes. When you get out you want to smoke some weed, drink, or whatever you wanna do, but it ain't worth it if you ask me.

You have your whole life to smoke, drink, or whatever, but when you get out and you smoke, or whatever, you lose trust.

You're just asking to be put back in jail, the nasty food, the early bed time, people telling you what to do. It sucks! And when I get out I want to change but we'll just wait and see what happens.

-Grizzly

From The Beat: Change is all about each person. The question to you is, how bad do you want this change? How bad do you want to stay out of detention? How bad do you want to keep your freedom? It's all about a choice.

Things I've always wanted to do is

One thing I've always wanted to do
is be with my family.

One thing I've always wanted to do
is to have things the same way they used to be.

One thing I've always wanted to do
is to have my baby niece with me.

One thing I've always wanted
is to have my girl Sandy with me.

One thing I've always wanted to do
is to try and be a better auntie for my niece.

-Amanda

From The Beat: It's time to start thinking about the things you miss and want, and compare it to the "fun" you've been having. Are the decisions you've been making worth what your missing?

Violence

Violence got me time
Counting the bricks in my room
Hoping I get out of here soon
I committed a violent crime
I couldn't keep my self in line

-Was Out Of Control

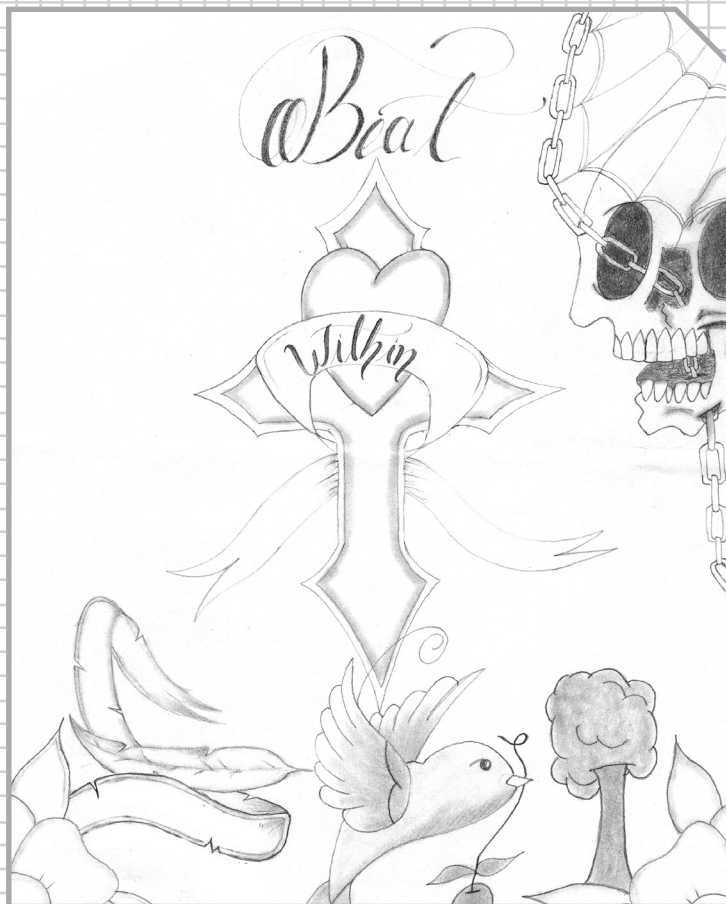
From The Beat: One question to you, was it worth it?

The Value of One Life

My life is what you call hell
Every time I'm walkin'
I'm takin' a vacation
To the underground
Fools always trippin'
'Cause I'm a classy, girl
I ain't never give it up first
I have one life
Take care of my baby boy
He is the main thang
He keeps me movin'
Day by day
The hood is takin' over
Drugs ~and~ sex don't mean nothin'
AID's comin' up quick
Young people dyin'

-Diamond

From The Beat: And you should take care of your baby boy, keep in mind it's not about just "You" any more it's about your baby boy and you now. Yes, there is a lot more to life then just "sex", but if you do please make sure it is with protection.



My Life

I got locked up at such a young age, and I didn't really care.
Never wanted to change
now I'm sitting here trying to rearrange,
to find a better place
to have a better day.

-A new me

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you're trying to make a change. That alone will start you in the right direction for a better day.

Hello

I would like to send my positive salutations to The Beat Within and the family within us. I'm back once again for some insubstantial reasons.

I just graduated from a program called Rites Of Passage. I did a year and I was out for a month, trying to enjoy life and do something productive with myself. But nothing was coming my way. I'll be gone for another eight months at a ranch up in Redding. Then I'll be eighteen. I'm looking forward to consolidating myself, as well as getting my diploma. I'll leave it at this, for now. Hope this gets out there.

-Listo

From The Beat: Next time, if nothing is coming your way, keep looking. Don't give up. It cost you an extra eight months this time. Next time, if there is one, it could cost you a lot more. Don't let that happen. Work hard. Thanks for your piece.

One Thing...

One thing I've always wanted to do is just fly away to a place where it's just me, myself, and I – a place where there are no problems or things to worry about, like court, and stuff like that.

-M

From The Beat: We can dream M, but eventually we have to wake up. Problems are a part of the price we pay for the gift of life. It's how we handle our problems that makes all the difference. Maybe you'll decide you want to start handling your problems in a different way. There are people who can help you, if you ask.

One Thing...

One thing I've always wanted to do is become successful in life. I've had dreams of having kids and a wife, making money legal. But right now I'm single and ready to mingle.

From The Beat: All good goals. You're young and life is long enough to do all sorts of things. But remember you can be single, mingle, AND make money in a legal way - all at the same time!

An Honest Appraisal

If my family would tell me everything honestly, I would like them to tell me. Something that I think they would say is that they love me and they want the best for me.

Also for my faults, they probably would say that my drug problems and alcohol abuse is bad. These are some of the things I think they would say.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: Being able to hear honestly what the people you love think about you is a very brave thing. It sounds like your family might tell you exactly what you need to hear: That they love you, but that they want you to change your lifestyle. Is there something that you would like to tell them?

Influence

Influence is what you make out of it and how you incorporate it.

It could be your hood and your family and outside role models. Staff in incarceration can be an influence, as authority figures. But influence is a habit and could be evil and good from different ways.

It's a bad habit to follow bad examples, like tweakers or negative suckas.

But I don't get influenced. I win and influence people myself. I'm very seductive.

-Andres

From The Beat: You say there are two types of influences, good and bad. You also say that you are a strong influence over others. What type of influence are you? What makes a good influence?

I'm The One Who Knows

When a boy falls in love he thinks over one girl. He wants to try to get a little thing going. Strange expression on his face is showin'. He gets an old rag and he shines his shoes, and passes the girls in his favorite shoes. After school he walks her home. When he gets home, he gets on the phone, tells his baby he misses he soul when he's just seen her five minutes ago. He talks an hour, hangs up, then picks up the phone and calls her back again.

-Brenton

From The Beat: So, that's how it's done. We've always wondered. Thank you.

What I Want, And Don't Want

I hate this place.

I want some fast food,
to see my boyfriend,
and my dad.

I just want to be able to walk somewhere not
in a rectangle court yard.

And I definitely don't want
to go back to Florida.

-Vigilante

From The Beat: You've listed some of the major motivators for getting out. Getting to choose what you eat, who you see, and where you walk are some of the simplest rights taken for granted. Try to remember this feeling.

The Best Times

The best times I had were when my man and I used to spend time together and he would hold me and we would just watch a movie.

I have been living with him since the age of fifteen, and I have not regretted any of it. He is everything to me.

When I found out he was incarcerated, I was shocked, because he's being charged with various things that will put him away for awhile. I'm sad I haven't talked to him. I hope he's fine and I hope to see him soon.

We had so many plans, like a nice apartment, decent jobs, and other things. I wish I was out so I could go to his court, but I'm stranded in these halls for I don't know how long. I wish I could tell him how I feel, but I have to wait, do my time first.

I wish I could go back to him, even though my family hates him because he's a gangbanger. I'm going to wait for him. I'm going to stay true to him and his love, always and forever.

-Diana

From The Beat: It's important to have someone we love in our life, but how do we know if this person is deserving of our love? You write that your family doesn't like him, that he is locked up, and that he is a gangbanger. Do you think any of these aspects of your relationship will change? Do you want them to change?

Satan

I'm the angel of musk.

It's bad language that I speak.

My attitude and rude appearance scare all of you.

You fear my name,
acknowledge my authority as temporary ruler over this world.

I've got the money, power, and all the girls.

If it wasn't for me, there wouldn't be freedom of belief.

No more grief. Just walk with me.

-S

From The Beat: We'd like to take some time to think about your generous offer - like maybe a lifetime, (if you don't mind, of course.)

Mur

Outside living is a vision in my grasp. But can I do it good? Can I handle myself being free? Of course I can, but it's my head that doubts my feelings of my heart. I want to have a life and live drug free one day but I'm not going to stay off or away from drugs I already know, not for a while will I become sober.

My head says one thing and my heart aches for another. This continuous argument must be growing up. I don't know what to do. I'm going insane, but I'm not going anywhere. I think I need a break from everybody. A vacation away from human beings, just no stress or people to worry or think about.

I guess I can't take that vacation because I need to work on my life. Work, Work, WORK! That's all it ever is. All work and no play makes murmur a Dull and frustrated kid. I don't need stress. I need a good life.

-Murmur

From The Beat: It sounds like you could use some help figuring out how to cope with stress. Some people write, some skate, some play basketball...It doesn't matter how you do it, but it does sound important to learn some way to find some peace for yourself. Maybe you'd like meditation. Somehow it would be great to find a way to groove more, so that everything doesn't feel like work.

Violent Spirit

I'm a violent person. I was brought up around violence and it amuses me. I watched Menace to Society when I was six with my older partner. It boosted my violent spirit up. When my friends are hurt, it makes me want to do bad things to bad people. I go straight to revenge.

-John Doe

From The Beat: Just like John Doe could be anybody, we all have the potential inside of us to be violent. Some say it's like a beast you must tame, and not feed with things like movies that excite that. Be aware of how you really choose to live, and plan out how you can live according to that.

Dear President Barack Obama

I think you will do a very great job. Considering the situation Bush put us in, we need a good president and I think you're going to be a good one.

I also think it's going to be good to get a little color in the White House. I think we need all those jobs back too and all those lost homes. I think you can do it.

-Jesse

From The Beat: We share your confidence and high hopes!

To The President

Dear Obama, I was just thinking about if you had the power to make Mexico America because I don't really know anything about like government stuff but I want Mexico and Mexicans legal because they benefit America by being good workers. Like who harvests fruit? Who builds a lot of houses? And who runs a lot of fast food restaurants?

The answer is it's mostly Mexicans and when they do they get discriminated for it like calling us border-hoppers and stuff and they want to actually work and have a better life. That is why most of us come here, but I'm just making a suggestion/statement. So I'm just hoping you really read this and really think about it.

-Pantoja

From The Beat: This is an issue the president will be thinking about and working on. They will probably never make Mexico America, however they may revise immigration laws. We hope the revised laws will be more fair to those who contribute so much to our society.

I Wanna Have Fun

What's up Beat? Man I got like two more months. I can't wait to hook back up wit my boys and finally be free again. Ima just celebrate everyday and make up for everything I missed. Just relax and live my life and have fun wit my patnas and some pretty girls. I miss my ninjas I can't wait to get money and have hella fun.

-Juice

From The Beat: Well everybody likes to have fun. We edited your piece though because we weren't sure whether some of what you're planning is legal. It can be a challenge not to do some things in the moment that seem like a good idea, because you're keeping your eye on long term goals—and one of those goals is not living in prison. Build a real life while you have fun, finish school and get a job!

Good Life

I just wanna get up out of here. Make it safe on the streets. Be there for my baby when it's born in June. Maintain at school, graduate, go to college get a good degree and make some money.

I want to get out be there for my mama. Set goals for myself like to succeed. To stay out of jail to accomplish something like being a good father. Be there for my baby to provide food, clothing, and a safe spot. To inspire my siblings to do the right thing, don't follow my mistakes.

I'ma have to figure out how to be a good Dad and how to stay out of trouble so I could work on that. Try to find God in my life and in my kid's life and start praising him and giving him thanks for putting a baby in my life and making me understand how to be responsible. Set goals for my baby when he grows up.

-Young R

From The Beat: Congratulations about your baby! Young ones really can help us realize what is most important to us...and because we care for them every day we remember that they need us. Good luck with your goals and family!

Violence Goin' On

Wassup Beat whats crackin? This your boy coming out of Vallejo tryna see whats up wit ya you feel me well I'ma talk about violence. I think violence is gonna keep on going on. I don't think its ever gonna stop because its pretty hard for people to stop using violence, that's one way you could deal with a problem. Alright then I'm gone, keep you head up to all that are doing time.

-Your Boy

From The Beat: Even though it's hard for people to stop using violence, we could still stop it if it's harming people and not effectively solving anything. Street violence seems to create a cycle of revenge...that has no end. Could you stop using violence, even if it was hard?

To Obama

I feel I'm not doing good in the juvenile place. I feel like it's unfair. I can't stand it. I get in trouble for nothing and that gets me angry so then I get mad to where I can't control myself and then I really get in trouble for being mad.

I just don't know what to do. Today I got mad and I started to punch the wall and now I can't come out of my room for today and tomorrow. That's not fair.

-Raysheem

From The Beat: We hope your hand has healed by now. Obama was a young man too, who had to figure out how to handle his anger. Sometimes people need help to learn how to control themselves, sometimes you can do it on your own. It is not easy, but it is possible. Now that you're in juvenile hall you have to live by their rules. Remember not to come back if you don't like the rules! Don't forget to breathe—you have a long life ahead of you...

My Letter To Obama

I wanna have marijuana legalized because I think it would do lots of good. For one it would stop people tearing down forests because marijuana grows in 4-6 months and produces 4 times as much paper than regular trees and regular trees take 20-40 years to grow.

Also it would stop people from selling it on street corners because everyone would be able to have their own plants in their homes. And how is it that alcohol and cigarettes are placed on the shelves of our local stores which are America's #1 killers and a simple plant is treated like a threat to mankind when it is scientifically proven impossible to overdose on marijuana.

But smoking is not the only reason it should be legalized we all know that hemp is very helpful plant in making strong materials that last longer than most things used today. Also it causes less pollution. But that's all the time I have right now. I really hope you take time to consider what I've said and consider legalizing the plant that will help America's people and end lots of worries.

-Krazy

From The Beat: This is a well written letter, well argued and thought out. Hemp is different from marijuana though right? Our understanding is that hemp does not have THC levels that would even make people want to smoke it. We also wonder why hemp has been so shut down. What is your personal connection to this?

Violence is Learned

I think people are only violent if they learn it. You can't be born with violence. The syck can't transfer violence from genetics, you have to learn to fight--you have to observe violence to learn violence, then you have to process what you've observed, put it into effect, and see what you can do.

You have to have heart to be a violent person. You have to have the courage to get hurt as well as the courage to hurt someone else or to kill. Some find it hard to hurt, some find it amusing, and others just can't handle it and those who can't handle it, then they're weak!!! And aren't prone to violence.

-Ace

From The Beat: We agree that violence is learned. We have also seen "heart" used the way you speak of it...and it no longer emphasizes kindness...or love. We think violence requires a coldness to feelings, an ability to turn off—which we think is also learned. Sometimes it takes courage and great strength to find another way besides violence—and that doesn't necessarily mean weakness.

I See What I See And I Feel What I Feel

I see what I see and I feel what I feel. But the love that I give you, is good to be real. I make you angry, and I make you sad. But really I'm just lovin what I never had, in Love.

It was a cool winter night the stars were shining bright love was in the air the fragrance everywhere, her name calling through the rain drops. Her beauty quite divine pressed against mine I removed all fear as I whispered in her ear "I'm madly in love with you oh yes, baby it's true" I let out a sigh as I gazed into your eyes staring, until - death do us part you and me one hundred percent of my heart. I will scream it from the highest mountains I will scream it from the tallest trees so that everyone shall know that I'm in love with you.

-Lovin'

From The Beat: Definitely one of the best reasons to be a free person is the ability to express mad love in all its various forms. We like your line "her name calling through the rain drops," and wish you much love in the future.

Freedom Is Coming

I've been here for 3 months. I've been trying to go to New F. but they've been lagging it. I've been here for 90 days and a month I'm trying to get over there to finish my sentence. It's a new year, I'm looking forward to the summertime and the beaches and barbeques and freedom and being with my family at the house and hopefully be out for my birthday.

-Juan

From The Beat: We're glad you can see the light at the end of the tunnel! You make summertime sound great. Good luck.

Waitin So Long

I've been waitin so long for a ninja to plot on me they think they gone ride on me I've been waitin patiently I've been waitin so long for a ninja to try me you ninjas than seen you know where I be I've been waitin so long (x2)

Dear momma if I go don't cry I'm in this game momma do or die

-Shawny D

From The Beat: We had to edit most of the verse because we don't print glorification of violence or illegal activity. Shawny, this reads like a song about death...is this how you want your life to end? Is it true that if you die you don't want your momma to cry?

Locked Up

What it do Beat, here we are, another week, I'm stuck in here till next month. I got court three days before my release date. And might be looking at a new placement either in the hall or I'm graduating to county. Hopefully I'm headed out this place. If not, then shh I'm doin time, I can't wait to get out this system. It's always draggin you down. Anyway Beat, I'm out till next week.

-Ali

From The Beat: What do you want and plan to do once you are out of the system? How can you plan your life so that you can stay out of the system?

What's Crackin' Beat

To all doing time it ain't nothing. I live this life. I was raised in the streets. Brought up to be real on what I represent. I got these thoughts that stay in my mind. I ain't afraid to do this little time. When I get back to the streets, I don't know what's going to happen.

I'm not leaving, judge told me this the last break. There's a 99% chance I'm going to prison at the age of eighteen. My risk is high. It's not like I'm not coming back to jail, so I'm not going to lie. When you walk the streets day in night there's that risk you're going to die. That's fine with me. I got die for something.

The streets are cold got play for keeps. My mind ain't based on money. I ain't a shame on what I do. Most people don't like it. They would have done it too if they lived my life. People like the president can do what they do. But it don't affect me or help me. I still live.

-Stunkey

From The Beat: We don't want to give up on you. We are not sure why you have given up on any kind of life besides prison. Many people have left this life and have gone on to have a family, a job, and a life they wanted to be living. We're not saying it's easy, especially if everyone around you is living this life. You have written about when you were a little guy you did not want to go to prison...you are still that person, and still have the potential for a life that little person had—before you even knew about all this type of life. Why are you so stubborn? You are being loyal to death, why? It doesn't care anything about you, living or dead.

Stop The Violence!

I think violence shouldn't be used at all, because it's better to talk things out. If everyone were to talk things out, the world would be a better place and most of the deceased would still have their lives. I think people use violence to show off and earn respect from their peers. That's not how you earn respect!!! Yes, I've used violence before but look where it got me? I've learned from my mistakes and when I get out, I'm going to talk things out with the people who don't like me. I'm ridding myself of all the violence in the system. So there you go, don't use violence in any situation. Just learn how to calm yourself down when a situation goes bad. Thanks Beat, for listening to my opinion!

-Tork

From The Beat: Thanks for writing Tork. We agree that violence is not the answer. People often use violence for the wrong reasons, it's as though they use violence to solve their problems because they saw someone else using it too. We're glad you've chosen the path of non-violence to solve your problems, and we hope you stick with it.

Violence In The Hood

I think you have to live up around violence to be violent. If you come from a good neighborhood you probably won't need to fight. In a bad neighborhood you need to be violent sometimes to get what you want. I think the only way you can change things is to be violent. If someone is disrespecting you, you can't just tell that person to be quiet. If they're disrespecting, it's probably because they want to fight. But if you respect each other or are from the same place, you probably don't need to use violence.

-Munchie

From The Beat: Hi Munchie. It's true that living around violence can make a person violent. Sometimes in order to stand up for themselves or others, people resort to violence; however, it is important to remember that violence is not always the answer. People may act disrespectfully, but it's only human nature. Violence doesn't have to be part of human nature. If everyone could give respect and get respect, then maybe we can end this cycle of violence.

More Food In JJC

Dear President Obama,

What are you doing? Me, just chillin with The Beat Within and I'm going to write to let you know that here in JJC, the food is never enough. We should get more food because they don't feed us enough so I was wondering if you could put more food on the table for us.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Sorry to hear the food is never enough. Young people need lots of nutritious food so they can grow up healthy and strong. No promises, but we'll try to get your message to Obama and see what can be done.

Love Of The People

Dear Mr. Obama,

I am glad you have become president. I would like to start by saying good luck with your first term in office. I am confident in saying I think you have the smarts, talent and the love of the people. All those things you must have to be a good president and be loved by the people. I hope and pray that you can turn this economy around. I will pray for you. Please don't disappoint our nation.

-Bradley

From The Beat: It's a great feeling for many people to experience this change in our country, this lift in morale and spirit. We'll hope and pray together that our economy, and other issues affecting our nation, will turn around for the better. We can also get involved in helping President Obama by talking with our loved ones educating ourselves about the issues and encouraging our community to continue to vote and help to turn these important changes into reality.

What Matters

Twenty years from now it won't matter what shoes or what style you had your hair in. What will matter is how long you lived and how much you learned.

-Joshua

From The Beat: Great words of wisdom and insight! What inspired you to come up with this thought?

Obama Is Changing The World

Our world is a big disaster, but ever since Obama stepped into office, people are living happily ever after, gas prices went down, and every lady is happy in town. From schools to gyms, stores to lockdown prisons, Barack Obama is changing the world. Nobody is missing and homeless people are roaming the streets where Obama is finding a place for them to sleep. So when you hear Obama is coming to town, don't sit on the couch and frown, get out and see him.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Yes, a change in our country's leadership has come. Some people fail to realize how wonderful it is to see the first African American president take office. But like you said, a change has come and we should go out and greet change.

It Sucks Here

It sucks in here because I am not going to be home with my family and because the staff always has to tell you what you do, like when to do your PT. I hate it when you have to wake up really early and do the PT, and if people sound off then we have to start all over. I really miss my family. I went to court yesterday and they were going to let me out but my mom and dad didn't show up to court. That shhh was not cool. I wanted to cuss out my family really bad.

To be honest though, when I get out I will probably be dead. I know that God put me here for my own good. It really sucks in here. I want to be out with my family so that I can let my daughter know that I love her and to tell her not to worry about me while I am gone because I will be home soon.

-Peanut

From The Beat: We are glad that you see that your actions have consequences and we hope that you do get to see your family soon. AS a father, you owe it to your child to do the best you can for her and for yourself so good luck.

My Opinion On Violence

I do not think people are inherently violent. People resort to violence for many reasons depending where you live or how you are raised and so on. I think if you grow up in the ghetto, you're chances of joining a gang or committing a violent crime is much higher, compared to living on a richer side of town. Nobody is born violent, it all depends on what you see, what is done to you and your reaction. Most kids act violent cause they know nothing else. They weren't taught right and it's hard to readjust from what you already know, like being on the block all day.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Growing up, we sometimes become products of our environment. If you grow up in a violent neighborhood, most likely you will be violent. But it takes self-will to decide to rise above the negativity. We often choose to stay the same, and it can be a challenge to change for the better. Even though many of us grew up surrounded by violence, gangs and drive-by shootings, we can still decide to defy all of that and choose a better path. We do agree that environmental pressures are overwhelming sometimes. We hope that you or some of your peers will help continue to tell about the cycle of violence and help change the environment for young people in the future.

Lover, Not A Fighter

There are better ways to solve issues instead of doing something dumb or violent. You can take a deep breath, go for a walk, or talk to someone about it.

I have let my anger get to me and I hate it. Then I do something stupid that will get me into trouble and that I will regret. It gets my mom, brothers and sisters sad. I hate when I do this because they all love me so much. They help me a lot. They are there for me all the time and it makes my mom stressed out and cry.

As for me, it makes me very sad and stressed out because I love my family so much and I hate having my mom see me like this. I hate myself, seeing me like this.

Because my mom does not want me here, and all she asks of me is to do good and go to school and stay out of trouble and be quiet. She doesn't want to see me live this lifestyle. She doesn't want me to be here or in jail or prison, and I don't want to live that life.

All I want is to learn from my mistakes and then go to college to help out young kids like me, to let them know it's not worth messing up. There are better things to do then be in trouble.

I want to do good and show my dumb dad's side of the family that I'm better than them. I will show them that I'm not stupid like their family. I'm a smart, loving kid. I'm a big lover, not a fighter. I love to love. All I want is to make my mom, brothers and sisters happy for me and keep the family together. I want the whole family happy.

-Roman

From The Beat: Your words are strong Roman. You can do this; you just have to try. You seem like a very caring and loving person, and you just have to stop doing what makes you bad. Keep writing instead of being in the streets. You can show your family and prove them wrong. Speak up and do what's right. Just by writing this piece, you've shown us that you don't want this life. You can have a better life.

Home

I want to go home really bad. I miss my mom and I am tired of worrying about visits. There is nothing I can do about it though but to pray to God to let me out because I wish that they would set me free.

-Nick

From The Beat: Freedom comes with responsibility. If you want to be free on the outside it is important that you respect others, yourself and the laws around you.

Think Within The Beat

There are many people locked up for violent crimes and some that are locked up for minor crimes. But in the long run any crime can get you locked up. In a tiny cell for nineteen hours a day, being told when you can do something. Missing out on your family and friends on the outs. Hardly ever get to see the sun, only the light that you can see through a tiny window. No matter where you go always behind locked doors.

No one was born to be this way, it is just the path you take in life. You are the only one that puts yourself behind all these locked doors. So if you are someone reading this who has not experienced this, think twice before you act. Put your family before the actions that get you locked up. If you want to have a good life, stay off the streets. Think within the beat.

-Lucky Charms

From The Beat: Your words are strong and we hope many young people take your advice. We know someone who was locked up for eight years straight, and that didn't go well. When he finally came out, everything changed. He lost many friends who were close to him. His family forgot about him. Because of his actions, he lost the connection with many people. Being locked up is scary and lonely, and no one wants that.

Stand Up To Violence

Violence has been around on earth for as long as Adam and Eve. As soon as Eve bit the forbidden fruit and sinned against God, that's when violence entered earth. When we look back into history, Cain killed Abel, his own brother, out of jealousy.

Many Romans found it entertaining to watch as others battled for their lives. Violence is all around in this world. It's on television, in music, at schools. Everywhere we turn, we are faced with violence.

The real problem is that parents aren't teaching their children how to deal with peer pressure and what to do if you are violently approached. This results, in my opinion, fuel for the flame of violence. People are scared to stand up and look violence in its eye and stand firm.

-Jerome

From The Beat: Jerome, thanks for writing. We are impressed with your historical knowledge and the way you try to look at human patterns from the past. We agree with you, but we also think it's not only the parents' fault. We have to be able to listen to the little voice inside ourselves that says "don't do that, be careful." But yes, many parents do need to step up to the plate. We all have the ability to change, and it might be as simple as changing the channel on TV. Violence exists, but we have to try to do everything we can to not nurture and kindle a flame that shouldn't be there. Just by writing this piece, you've taken a stand, and we hope more young people do too.

Getting Straight

The days in this Hall are going by fast, but I still do not feel like being here anymore.

I miss my mom, my family, and my son.

I really can't wait to get out of here and to do good by being a father to my son.

I want to graduate from high school and go to college.

-Numbers

From The Beat: We are glad that you are open to change, but it is easier said than done when you don't make a plan. So what will you do first to get what you want?

What's Up Prez?

What's up new president? I want to say I am happy for you to be the president. I just want to tell you also not to stress off things. I know you can do it because I heard some of your speeches. I think you are going to make change. For reals, like something in my brain told me that. You may think I am crazy, but it's for reals. Hopefully you can write to me so we can chop it up, like talk. Maybe you could give me some advice on life. It's cool if you don't want to though. But yeah, take care, and make some good decisions. I know I don't have to tell you that because I know you will.

-Nino

From The Beat: Yo, we think it's real cool that you took time out to write to our new president. Just like you, we have faith in him and it's wonderful how you look up to him. Maybe if he doesn't write back, you can always listen to him talk because he always has inspirational things to say. Stay strong, and if you do get the chance to talk to Obama, tell we said "what's up" too!

Getting Messed With

Some kid in my pod socked me in the head. But I want to say Mom, that I know how to avoid all of the fights. I just talk to my fellow friends in here and tell them that I have faith, and they help me tell people that I don't want any problems.

-John

From The Beat: Way to be brave and stick it out. Most times when people are violent in the Hall it is because they need a friend and don't know how to be one themselves.

Fixing The World

Dear Mr. President,

I think you did a good job on your speeches. I know you will fix our world's problems.

-Devor

From The Beat: Our country is facing a turbulent time. We'll need to actively support our new president so he can begin to address the many issues that face our country and world. Together, let's hope for the best to come.

An Unfinished Story

I really feel like I messed up. Now I am in here in the Fresno JJC, stuck. I've never really been in here before and I guess I thought I could get away with just about anything. Reality kicked in real quick though and now I am in here.

I miss being able to do stuff that I like, like playing video games, watching movies, reading good books, eating a hot meal and especially writing. Before I was in here I was writing a book. I really wanted to get it done and publish it soon. Now it seems like that dream has faded.

Hopefully I will get to continue it but I don't know. I just can't seem to get any motivation anymore. It's like I hate everything! Do you think you can help me?

-Jacob

From The Beat: Sometimes when we have goals in mind they have to be put off because other things become more important at the time, but sometimes we don't realize that we can use what is happening around us to reshape our goals and make them new. So how can you use this experience to help you do what you love, to write a book? We understand that you are experiencing difficult emotions right now. However, your emotions, whether positive or negative, can be great fuel for finishing your book or to start another writing project. It seems like you've already figured out how to discipline yourself to write something as major as a book, keep going in that direction...see your book and positive goals in life to completion.

To The President

To the President Barack Obama, how you been? Well, I just want to tell you that you have to be a good president and I also want to tell you congratulations for being the first African American president. As president, I wish you the best and remember do what you said you would do when you were running for office. Be a real president and I want to get out here and never come back and do my best out in the streets.

-John

From The Beat: Thanks for your letter to President Obama. It's too bad you couldn't take part in the process of electing him. But hopefully he'll live up to your expectations. It seems that his success has inspired you to do your best in life. We have faith in you and encourage you to try hard and reach your goals. Good luck!

Why I Am Here

The reason I am in the JJC is because I was ditching school because I had a class that I didn't like the teacher. So my friend and I left the class and started walking the halls at school saying bad stuff to the other teachers as we passed by other classrooms.

A CA at our school caught us after a teacher reported us, and we both got expelled from the school. I was already on probation and wasn't supposed to have any police contact and this event violated it, so they locked me up.

-Daniel

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot to learn about respecting others. We hope that something in you sparks an interest in your own education before it is too late, and you begin to regret your decisions.

Changing For Her

I miss her smiles, her cute giggles, and I miss the way that she would wake me up in the middle of the night. I miss her beautiful blue eyes and the way that she talked. She was born in august of last year, and she is the most important thing in my life. She gives me the push I need to keep going. I have already changed my life for her and I will be the best father that I can be. Nobody understands the hurt that I feel. If I could speak to her I would tell her how sorry I am. I would tell her that I will be there for her every day.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: Being a parent is the best joy in life, but it is also a lot of responsibility. How can you show her that you mean what you say?

Violence

When I was little my family was having problems with drugs, which caused a lot of problems in my life. When I was younger there was a lot of violence that taught me how to be violent too. I used to be really violent and it caused me a lot of trouble. My opinion is to control your temper because violence can have you end up in jail or even dead.

-Seth

From The Beat: Being exposed to violence is often not a choice we make, but is made for us? And it takes a brave person to realize that you do have a choice whether you want to keep that violence going and expose others to it through your own actions. Keep your head up.

Obama & Change

I think Obama will make a good president. He had better ideas than McCain. Obama's ideas for change were to help the economy, and the environment.

-Valden

From The Beat: We think so too, and we know he'll need the support of young people like you in order to carry out those changes.

Not Born To Hurt

I think people are violent because of outside forces all around us. There are neighborhoods around us that are very violent. People are not born to hurt other people. It depends on the environment around us.

-Francisco

From The Beat: One's environment plays a big role in determining how violence gets used. What factors contribute to making a good environment for young people?

Reunited

I am not feeling the topics today so I am going to write about what is on my mind, my girl. Before I got locked up we broke up over some drama. But I let her know the truth about that situation and how I really feel about her.

She forgave my boy and then we got back together. I can't help but to think about this old school song that keeps running through my head, the chorus goes... reunited and it feels so good... And it is so true. I love this girl so much that my words are indescribable. She is my soul, my world, and my love. I love her unconditionally. We just need to keep it bonded and don't let anything get between us.

-Joey

From The Beat: Being separated from those you care about is hard, but a relationship cannot grow together when you are not whole yourself. We hope you work on yourself while you are in here too. Oh, the song you mentioned is "Reunited" by a singing duo, Peaches and Herb.

The Good Times

I am 11 years old and I am locked up. I remember when I was at home and I was having fun. I used to play soccer and eat lots of good food. Most of all I miss my family because when I am at home I have a big smile on my face and a little dog names princess.

-Bernadino

From The Beat: You are so young still, we hope that you remember what it was like to have consequences to your actions and stay out of trouble at home.

Back Again

I just got done doing fifteen months and I had told myself that I was going to calm down when I got out of here, but only two months went by and for some shhh I am back here. But I am not trippin' because this is the block to be on. They can't hold me here forever, so watch out.

-Lil' Izreal

From The Beat: It doesn't sound like you want to change this time either. It will just keep getting harder and harder each time you come back until you give in and learn to respect yourself!

A Letter To God

Lord, I have done wrong in my life, but I have also done good too. I pray to you because I believe in you, I trust in you, therefore I have faith in you.

I am a sinner, I have sinned, but in this letter, as I do every day, I ask you to forgive me. This time that I have been confined, I have realized my mistakes, and I am willing to change. I pray and ask you to help me to change.

You know everything that I have done and I am sorry. But that night that I came here I was doing a good deed and not a crime, please help me to go home and continue my life with my mistakes fixed. Thank you Lord, you are my father, savior, everything. Help me and be with me now.

-Zack

From The Beat: Your faith in a higher power is strength in you. Use it to figure out you can help yourself and have as much faith in yourself to be the change you want to see.

Doing Good

I wanted to get out of here and not come back. I don't want to do bad, I want to do good at home. I don't want to get in fights or they will give you more time.

-Bernardino

From The Beat: Your definitely thinking the right way, stay positive.

Remaking America

Remaking America means to me to build a faster transit system in Fresno. It means to stop building homes so that all the ones in foreclosure can get sold first, or rented out. It means to give the homeless homes so that they are not on the streets. Also, we should be giving bigger paychecks to the disabled. I also think that Liaisons should get better paychecks too. They should not charge families either, for their kids having to spend time in Juve either. They should also provide better food in the jails and the prisons too.

-Cody

From The Beat: These are large things to accomplish that will take lots of hands. How can you help to get these things done that you seem to care a lot about?

How I Fell Today

Today I didn't get to play basketball with the pod for something and it made me really mad because I had to stay in my room and didn't get any fresh air. I have court on the fifth of this month and will probably have to transfer to boot camp. It sucks because I want to see my family and my girl, and especially all of my nieces and nephews too. I miss them all so much when I am in my room thinking. To everyone reading this, stay up and stay out of here!

-Timmy

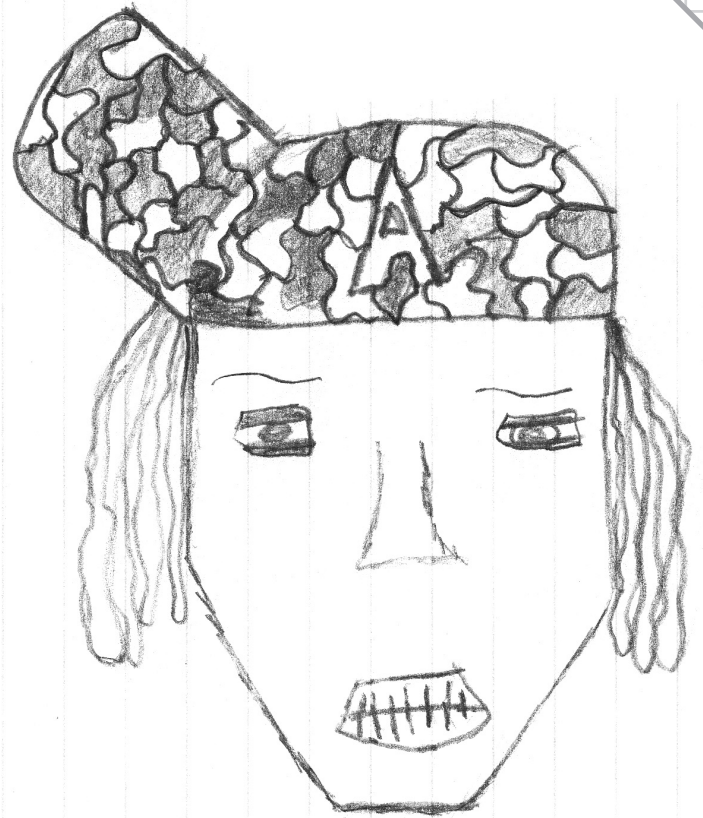
From The Beat: WE wish you luck wherever you go next and hope that you learn to appreciate what you have on the outside the next time you have big choices to make.

Dear President

I voted for you in November, because I think that you are looking out for our youth. You have promised change and we all know that it will take time.

-Hopeful kid

From The Beat: Not only will it take time but it will take the help of many others, and we want to know how you think you could help too?



Getting Out

Well, I am finally getting out of here at the end of the week! I gotta get my life together; I am going to be 18 with no probation. I can't wait to go to Florida to play football, but I need to get a job first. These topics are crazy this week, but I understand them. My life is going to be a lot better when I get out. At least I hope so.

-Crazy Boy

From The Beat: We wish you luck in seeing your goals through. Remember to take your change one step at a time and be responsible for yourself.

No Lo Creía

Le dijera a mis seres queridos que los quiero mucho especialmente mi mama.

Cuando mi amigo falleció no lo creía. Fue algo muy triste para mí porque siempre pasaba con él y siempre lo tengo en mi corazón y en mi mente.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho tu pérdida. A veces las cosas pasan por alguna razón, que nos enseñan una lección y aprendamos de ella.

I Didn't Believe It

I would say to my loved ones, especially my mom that I love her.

When my friend died, I couldn't believe it. It was something sad for me because I was always with him and I'll always keep him in my heart and mind.

-Carlos, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. Sometimes things happen for a reason, to teach us a lesson that we can use to learn from it.

Lo Que Dijo Obama

Obama el mencionó como el mundo ha cambiado, tenemos q cambiar el mundo. El quiere ayudar a todas las familias que necesitan ropa y comida.

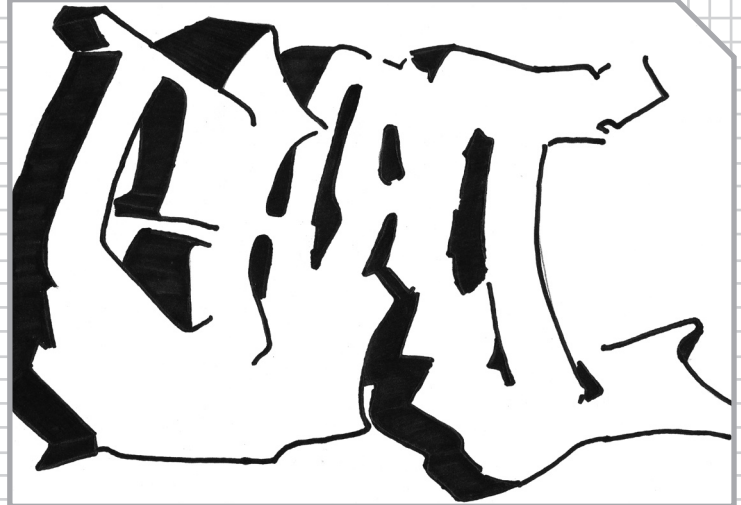
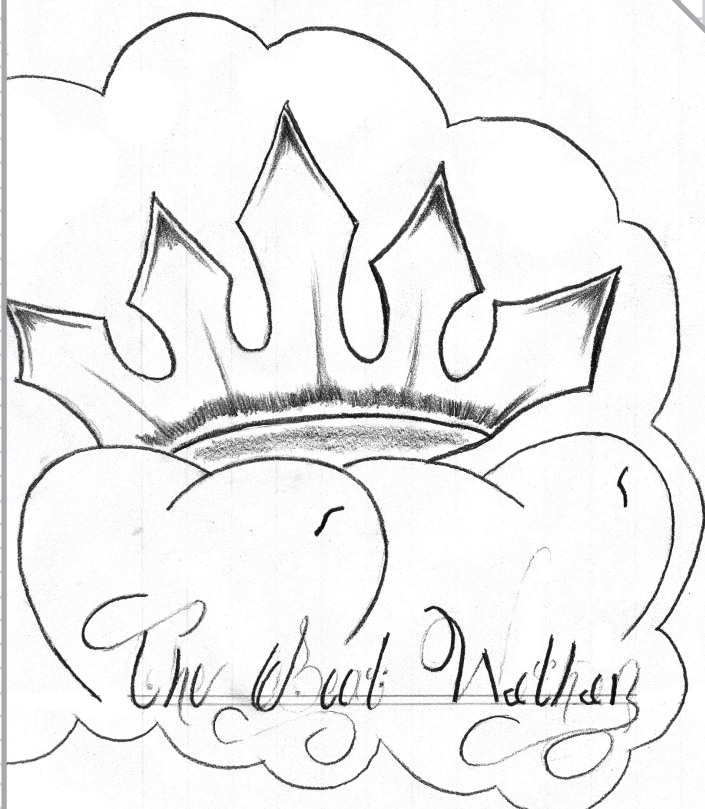
From The Beat: ¿Estas dispuesto a cooperar con el cambio de este mundo? ¿Cómo? Recuerda que él no lo puede hacer solo.

What Obama Said

Obama mentioned how the world has changed, and how we have to change the world. He wants to help the people who need clothes and food.

-Edgar, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Are you down in cooperating in changing this world? How? Remember that he can't change all this on his own.



Un Poco Triste

Que onda? ¿Cómo está la raza? Me encuentro ahorita en la juvenile.

Cuando me vine de Honduras, me vine un poco triste porque mire a mi mama y me dió tristeza decirle que ya me venía. Se quedo preocupada por mí, pero gracias a Dios llegue bien a este país.

Ahorita estoy preso en este lugar y me van a deportar. Le doy gracias a Dios porque voy a volver a ver a mi mama. Estoy un poco triste pero tambien gracias a mi Señor Jesus Cristo voy a volver con mi mama y mi familia.

From The Beat: Para la proxima vez, deberias de consultar con ella antes de tomar una decision. Si vas a hacer algo que traiga mucho riesgo, hazlo por algo que valga la pena. Gracias por tus palabras.

A Little Bit Sad

What's up? How are you? I find myself in juvenile hall

When I came from Honduras, I came here a little bit sad because I saw my mother right after coming here, and I got sad to tell her I was leaving. She stayed worried about me, but thank God I made it to this country.

Right now I am locked up in this place and they are going to deport me. I thank God I'm going to see my mother. I am a little bit sad, but thank my Lord Jesus Christ I'm going to see my mother and family.

-Chele, San Francisco

From The Beat: For the next time, you should consult your decision with your mother before making one. For the next time, if you're going to do something risky, do it for something that is worth it. Thanks for your words.

Soy De Honduras, Pero...

Hola, no soy de este país, pero espero que les vaya bien con el nuevo presidente. Ojalá que sea sierto lo que prometió con las promesas que les ha echo. Yo sé que este país va a tener un nuevo cambio.

From The Beat: Eso esperamos también. ¿Y cual será tu cambio?

I Am From Honduras, But...

Hi, I'm not from this country, but I hope everything turns out well with your new president. I hope he keeps his words he promised. I know this country will have a new change.

-Luis, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope so too! What will be your change?

Para Ella

Con toda el alma así quisiera amarte siempre así con la alegría q le has devuelto ahora a mi vivir.
 Apesar de que me digan ,que no me pude enamorar tan pronto así de ti, estoy enamorado y eso me hace feliz
 Robarte un beso, una caricia y despues tener tu cuerpo te lo confiezo tambien quisiera tener todo eso luego hacer una canción
 que parezca una oración
 para pedirle a dios que te deje aqui en mi corazón.
 Amor, amor, amor con toda el alma te amaré
 de mi siempre tendras lo q no pudo darte alguien más,
 amor amor amor con todo el alma te amaré
 llegaste con tu luz treyendo paz y calma
 por eso prometo amarte siempre así con toda el alma.

From The Beat: Que linda dedicación! Para la próxima nos gustaría un poema sobre tu vida. Si le vas a escribir algo dirigido a otra persona, hazlo en otro momento y directo a ella. Nosotros tenemos otro propósito.

For Her

With all my heart,
 I would love you always like this with much happiness
 that you've brought to my life.
 In spite of what they say, that I didn't fell in love so soon,
 I am in love with you and that makes me happy.
 To steal a kiss, a caress, and after that have your body
 I confess I also want to have it all, and make a song
 That can sound like a prayer
 To ask God to leave you here in my heart
 My love, love, love, I will always love you with my soul
 From me, you will have everything other couldn't give
 My love, love, love, I will always love you with all my soul
 You came to me with your light bringing peace and calm
 That's why I promise to love you always with all my soul.

-Arias, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a nice dedication! But next time, we would love if you write another poem about your life. If you're going to write something directed to another person, do it on your own time. We have a different purpose.

El Peligro

Buena aquí les va otra de mis historias. Yo he salido muhas veces de mi ciudad porque mi vida a corrido peligro y para proteger ami familia. ¿Te imaginas como te sintieras que a unos pandilleros locos te buscan, que no te encuentran y que se quieren vengar de tu familia? Por eso piensa bien las cosas antes de salir de tu hogar y proteje a tu familia.

Yo tengo una foto que la llebo en mi corazón. Esta mi madre y mi hijo. Por eso haz bienla cosas y portate bien. Cuida a tu familia y trata de dar un buen ejemplo.

From The Beat: Entendemos que te sientas preocupado por tu familia. Tienes que buscar la forma como ser diferente y tomar decisiones que no perjudiquen a las personas que quieres. Creemos que esta experiencia te ayudará mucho cuando estes cerca de cometer otro error.

Danger

Well, here goes another of my stories. I've ran away from my city many times because my life has been in danger and I also needed to protect my family. Imagine how would you feel if some gangsters were looking for you and don't find you, and want to take revenge on your family. That's why I suggest you to think about things before you leave your city and have to protect your family.

I have a picture I carry in my heart. It's my son and my mother. That's why I'm telling you to think about thing well, and behave well. Take care of your family and try to set a good example.

-Catracho, San Francisco

From The Beat: We understand that you are worried about my family. You need to find a way to become a different person and make decisions that won't affect the people you love. We believe this experience will help you a lot, so don't for get what's more important when you get close to make another mistake.

Dios

¿Que sería de mí si no me hubieras alconzado?
 ¿Donde estaría si no me hubieras perdonado?
 Tendría un vacío en mi corazón, vagaría sin rumbo
 Y sin dirección
 Si no fuera por tu gracia y por tu amor
 Siempre cuando te encuentres en estos momentos pídele
 a Dios que El es grande y te va ayudar,
 te va dar paz en tu corazón y todo te va salir bien.
 Dios es amor y paz.
 Villa Franca, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que estes aquí porque perdistes el rumbo? ¿Cual es tu destinación? Gracias por tu mensaje. También deseamos que Dios te de fuerzas y buena vida en tu mundo.

God

What would have been of me if I hadn't reached you?
 Where would I be if you hadn't forgiven me?
 I would probably have an empty space in my heart, and travel without a heading or destination
 If it wasn't for your grace and love
 When you find yourself in hard moments, ask God
 To help you, He is big, and He will help you
 He will give you peace in your heart
 and everything will go well
 God is love and peace,
 Villa Franca, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

-Chele, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do you think you're here because you lost the guidance of your destination? What's your destination? Thanks for your message. We also hope God give you the strength you need and a new heading to a better life.



Forever

My eyes are shut still I see you so clear
 I stare in your eyes and the whole world disappear
 Leaving us together so no one can see
 That me and you could really be
 Maybe now or the life after, if it was meant to be
 No matter what happens
 My love for you will live for eternity
 That's the truth, really that's real
 But you can never really understand how I feel
 Until you decide to listen to what my heart has to say
 I would just let yo' heart get away
 I'll chase it for miles
 And if stealing yo' heart is a crime
 Tell 'em I'm guilty, I'm skipping the trial
 It's nothing
 I'll do life for you
 Shhh just lock me down
 'Cause I might be within you.

HK has been a long time contributor since way back in the days when we found him locked down in a Maximum Security Unit, at Alameda County Juvenile Hall. He was always delivering thoughtful writing, as he was occasionally getting POWs (Piece Of the Week). Now HK, who will soon be 22 years old, is back with some more insightful writing and wisdom to dish out to all readers young and old. Writing from a California Youth Authority in Lone, CA, our old friend HK brings us some words of motivation and encouragement!



Your Life

Your life is worth more than that click or that block, that's gone be there when you die, with new dudes doing the same thing you did.

Your life is worth more than that pistol charge or that murder case.

You wanna know something? A gun don't make you a gangsta'. Killing somebody or selling drugs don't make you gangsta' because a nerd could carry a pistol. A five-year-old boy could pull a trigger and kill someone.

Man, yo' life is worth more on the street than in prison. And the dude you did your crime with, you think he solid because he say he gangsta'? But he's the one telling on you.

If you only knew what kind of pain you caused your mama, grandma, and whoever else loves you.

Your life is worth more than what you think it's worth. Everybody has a positive purpose in life. It might take long to find out what it is, but it may make you rich one day. Once you learn, you live, because darkness soon comes to light. So what's yo' life worth?

I'm Focused Now

I remember around the end of 2004, The Beat Within asked me, "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?" Well I'm still in the "Y" right now. That was almost 5 years ago, and people are still asking me questions. Well next year I'm out. Five years from there I'll be graduating college. Why? It's because I'm focus now.

There are so many kids and young adults in here that's not focus. So many catching time add-on's for stupid reasons. But me, I'm focus now because of the time I spent behind these walls, I gotta work extra harder to get where everyone else is at.

It's nothing though. I'm focused now. So when someone look you in yo' eyes and lie to you telling you, you gone be just like yo' dad, or you never going to be a success, or you ain't gone be shhh. Tell them straight up. I'm focused now. Man, you young ones in the hall right now, step that game up and get focused. I'm out.

• DANIEL LAINEZ •

The Beat

Greetings, from within to you and all your staff. Well I wanted to give credit and respect to you all for giving a voice to our troubled youth and for giving them positive guidance. Man I trip out when I read their articles and poetry. I can relate on so many levels. I also grew up troubled as a youth and chose that street life and pursued that criminal fame.

I now realize the sad reality of this life style as I did it all, but got no where in life. Most real G's in the game are busted in maximum security or dead. I ended up in maximum security at the age of "17." I'm now soon to be "29". I wasted so many years of my life in prison, "Where you learn to mature quickly." I have benefited from the trip in two ways.

One: I matured as a person and took the opportunity to educate myself.

Two: I got to see the truth behind the glamorized image of that thug life/Vida Loca. It's a rough road to walk down. And most of the OG's will tell you. If I only had another chance, I would do it differently. It breaks my heart to see the youngsters choose the wrong path. Soak up some game from a real gee

Our next writer is trying to put you up on some real game. So we'd advise you to not skip this piece, get your snack out, or kick back on your bunk, and read this. Do not miss this opportunity and let someone from deep inside these prison walls let you know what they would do different if they had another chance. Sending us his OG game from deep in California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA, who wants to let all you readers know a little a secret about this game!

that's done it and survived many struggles and wars.

This ain't living! Like Pac said, "We giving you jewels, use them like tools." Do something positive with your life. You only live once. Help reconstruct your community. Remember one hand washes the other and if you ain't part of the solution, you're part of the problem. I wish you all the best on your journeys, and no matter what happens keep your head up. God Bless!

Well Beat I hope you can get my message to those youth, if at least one listens then we made a difference. Thank you for your effort in the struggle. God Bless You All. Thank you.

Respectfully and Sincerely,
 A friend and supporter...



Be A Leader

When one, is at his/her lowest, you can do one of two things: accept defeat or dig deep within yourself to strive for embetterment. So choose wisely because from that point on you have only yourself to blame for everything that happens in your life after that.

Stick to the basics and change the things that you have control of now (your thoughts, actions, beliefs, etc...). Don't worry about that which is out of your control. Ain't nothing going right for a reason. So instead of dwelling on that, figure out a way to get around your problems. Learn the lesson from your mistakes, and push for embetterment.

Humble yourself and accept reality. Get out of that fantasy world and keep it real with yourself. Strive to be the best that you can be. That should be your motivation. Give your all and stay firm in your beliefs and actions. There is never enough learning for you. You can learn something good from every person you meet. Either it can be something you keep and use in your life, or it can be something you would never do. Life is your teacher.

It's not how you die, but how you live while you are here that will be remembered. Some of the best then been worse than anything you can imagine and prevailed to accomplish great things. Stay focused, positive, and be a leader.

Our next writer has been gracing the pages of our publication for quite some time now constantly delivering piece after piece of inspirational and motivated writing. Mr. Daniels is never hesitant to speak his mind and calls things exactly how he sees them, never sugar coating anything. Sending us these powerful pieces from California Corrections Institution in Tehachapi, CA, Mr. Daniels digs deep within himself to deliver some great knowledge for us to grasp!

Fooled or Betrayed

As a child growing up, you don't know none of the wickedness of the world. You only mimic what you see done or what is taught to you. Children have no faults. What you see in a small child is their innocence in the newest form. As parents, we much be the protectors, providers, etc. So you are responsible to install in the kid morals and values, which you know are righteous. Life is a struggle from first breath to last. To really enjoy life, count and cherish the moments in life that truly take your breath away.

You can't expect for things to be better for your kid's future if you aren't practicing good yourself. You alone are the real role model. Not the person they see on televisions. Watching T.V. is escaping reality, watching you is reality. Life is a constant learning experience. So it's no reason for you to not teach your kid the truth. If you know, then you are held responsible, whether you like it or not.

This time away no matter how long or short your stay may be should be spent taking advantage of all that's good. There's positive that comes out of every struggle. So find it, whether it be education, life experiences, solitude, etc. Try to spend all your time, learning as much as you can. This is time with little or no distractions.

History repeats itself because we continue to let the next generation fall into the same traps and lies that we fell for. Break the cycle. Children cannot be fooled, only betrayed by adults.

The Ashes of a Memory

Living behind a mask of misery
 In reflections of lies I've shed blood
 Falls around me
 Yet their concerns not on my head
 Day and night the pain burns within
 contemplating the lies
 I've lived only to find this is not who I am

Chorus
 So hold me don't fear me
 Love this child that scares me
 Don't hate me
 Just listen to these tears
 I shed
 So change me
 And help from becoming

the ashes of a memory

Realizing these dreams that haunt me
 The nightmares of who I am
 Only wanting to be loved yet recognized from within
 Screaming out loud as the pendulum swings again
 Oh cant you find me as I call no more being alone
 So hold me now baby don't let me fall

Chorus
 So love me
 Don't mistrust me
 My heart's separating thin
 Just help me don't judge
 For my past burns within
 So hold me now, and help me from becoming
 The Ashes of a memory.

JAMES CRABB

Some of us know how hard it is being away from Family and loved ones. And we're not talking about vacation, we're talking about doing time for something that we probably regret doing. All the anger and frustration builds inside and we look for ways to try to release it. Some choose a negative way, by fighting, and taking it out on others that have nothing to do with it. But some people can vent out their frustrations through writing, as our friend James does for you today. Sending us his song from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA, James chooses to let his hand take control of his emotions.

Shadowed By The Pain

I look into your eyes you turn and walk away
 Never another glance it seems there's nothing left to say
 The past was a beautiful thing each memory by love
 Now every moment is shadowed by the pain
 Knife wounds that slowly heals each betrayal
 A burning bridge and a void
 Neither can fill with the loneliest word's goodbye
 I turn to walk away
 Finding a different road before me as we go our separate way

First Entry

As I lay on this stiff bunk wishing I had a desk to write this on I think about where I've been and where I'm going. Looking around this cold prison cell, wondering how can other convicts have lied on this bunk and put pen to paper to get out their thoughts and express themselves artistically. I'm trying so hard to block out of my mind how much I hate this place and how I can't do much about it.

My heart and respect goes out to all these strong men in here with long sentences to do. This place is hellish and being here day to day can really deteriorate a man's soul. The way CDC has this set up is to be a revolving door. You can't win without losing. They place you in a prison with hardened criminals for long periods of time expecting you to get out and be a better person that you were before you went in. That's crazy. This place only makes things worst and they know it. It ruins lives and kills off hopes of what could've been. Parole is a load of CDC crap. Your PO tries to help you like a crocodile tries to kiss you.

I thought the county system was screwed up but now I see where its whole infrastructure come from and who makes it like it is. I don't want to get into prison regulation politics or quote the Title 15, so I'm going to keep this personal.

This is my first entry into my prison life journal and I just wanted to say that I made it safely to Deuel Vocational Institute Reception Prison on December 8, 2008. This is my first bed and I'm beginning to get used to the program and how things are regulated. I must admit that I was glad to be in Sacramento Country Jail and on my way here to start my half time. Tired of being locked down all the time. I was

Our next writer, is the very faithful Professor Blackmind, who in recent weeks has truly shown the readers of The Beat Within lots of love. His latest entry, titled, "First Entry" is actually an entry from his personal journal, as he takes us on a journey through his mind, sharing his opinions on the CDC system and he also gives us a glimpse to his first day at Deuel Vocational Institute Reception Prison, back in December 2008. He sent this piece from his current home, Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA.

almost excited about having a change of scenery. We rode over here in a small van. I was seated next to a friend who was going to start his life-sentence. I could hear sadness in his voice as he told me about his case and how he intended to program once he left the mainline.

I listened to others tell their stories and it was all depressing. After waiting eight hours in a crowded holding talk, I grabbed my state-issued bed-roll and made it down the long hallways to my new living quarters, C-Wing. Seeing some familiar faces, I sent out greetings and headed to my cell when I first met my celly.

I knew he was an outsider before he even opened his mouth. I noticed the NY tattoo on his neck and then his accent when he said, "Yo, what's up? I'm Claude, but you can call me C-Money." I must admit, there was something about his swagger that I immediately disliked. He was cocky and somewhat self-absorbed. But giving him the benefit of the doubt, I reserved judgment and listened to him brag about all the money, cars, and women he has.

It makes me wonder, are all urban New Yorkers like this? Why tell a total stranger all of our business? I don't get it. After listening to all of Mr. Money's wondrous tales, I feigned a yawned and excused myself to read my Beat then go to sleep. Day one in prison was over as quickly as it started. I prepared myself for day two.

THE REAL, MUDD

Our next writer is quite a character, as he's been writing for our publication for a while now, but since we are so backed up we hardly get to print any of his writing. So this one is for Mudd as he comes through with some real thoughtful writing. He speaks from his heart as he tells you what kind of mentality he was in and how he regrets the mistakes he made. He doesn't want a lot of you young readers to make the same mistakes he made so he intends to give out a little advice. Writing from The SHU in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. "My Time Doesn't Have To Be Your Time" piece is simply letting all you readers know that you don't have to learn the hard way. Learn from his mistakes that way you won't find yourself saying the same things he's saying ten years from now.

My Time Doesn't Have To Be Your Time

Maximum is Minimum
 Or so lately it seems
 They got me locked up in the SHU
 Allowed not property
 So with this little pen filler
 That hardly holds any ink
 It's my voice as I spit verse
 On this sheet of loose leaf
 I contemplate creatively
 My time in this cell
 My time in this hell
 My time spending all by myself
 My street wealth
 Well, it don't mean a thing in this box
 I used to rock the freshest fits
 Now I walk with holes in my socks
 Girls on my arm were top notch
 As I flossed a platinum watch
 These days my wrists are hand cuffed
 And cop escorts me
 But that be the knocks
 Yo' these are the shots
 That hit your chest with a bang
 Soon it takes just one stray
 For the judge to give you all day
 I pray ya'll learn from my mistakes
 And put the street dreams away.

To The Youth

Check this out youngsters, here's some knowledge learned the worst way. A man won't put his hands on me without feeling the repercussions. I'm no punk, mark, or victim. Still that doesn't mean I have to put hands on some loud talker for running' his mouth.

Once you act on someone else's' words, you're letting him control you. Take control of yourself and try to stay out of the situations that will end up putting you in a position where it's time to square off. Even if the fights where I never got his, my knuckles still hurt and the loss of privileges (yard, canteen, phone visits) hurt more.

I fought to get a name and ended up with a prison number for ten years. One good hit equaled one more strike. I know that when you're in the cage there's going to be a time you have to fight. Do what you have to for survival, not glory.

Paranoia Part 2

Chapter 5: The Fear

Brian Caine decided to catch a bus home. He looked around and saw many people. He saw a high school girl listening to her iPod, a man in a business suit repeatedly checking his watch. You know the usuals you probably see on any bus. A man watching the rain outside, a woman with a black umbrella, and...

Oh no, no it can't be, he thought.

It was. James Ellwood was sitting next to the woman with the black umbrella.

But that can't be him, it just can't.

Unfortunately it was, and now he was wearing the same heavy black raincoat.

Brian stood frozen in terror and then thought: he must have been watching me, laying low until he decided to reveal himself. Hiding in the shadows watching me, studying me like an experimental monkey in a laboratory, covering his tracks so I wouldn't draw suspicions.

Well played James. Brian then pushed the button next to him signaling his stop, knowing very well that his real stop was three stops from this one. The bus came to a halt and the doors opened up. Brian then proceeded down the three steps in the front of the bus. The rain started pouting now, and Brian looked to see the smiling bus driver. The driver was James Ellwood. The bus drove off and Brian saw that in fact every single passenger of the bus he had gotten off of was James Ellwood. They all smiled their creepy smiles and they waved at him, their black raincoats making them look like vampires.

Overcome with fear and terror Brian Caine ran down the street and bumped into a man.

"Sorry," he said, looking back to see that the man was James Ellwood.

He then walked backwards, still staring at the man, and then he stumbled backwards. Many people around that saw it now circled him and they were all laughing and they were all

James Ellwood, he thought.

Countless swirling faces of James Ellwood were everywhere, laughing at him. Brian Caine felt he didn't have the strength to get up and when he did he struggled not to stumble again.

"Get out of my way! Move back! All of you right now!" He screamed at the top of his lungs, and when a path was clear he ran. He ran as if he was running from Satan himself. To him, it felt like he was.

Chapter 6: The Conversation

He walked into his house and then slammed his door shut then locked every single lock. He didn't turn on any lights. He just followed the neon glow of the bar sign next door.

He's everywhere, Brian thought, he's watching me.

The phone in his house began to ring.

You already know who that is Brian, don't answer it.

It rang again and he did answer it.

"Hello, who is this?"

"Hi, Henry Worthington? You probably don't remember me. My name is Stella Landry."

"Of course I remember you Ms. Landry," he said, beginning to relax.

"Well, I did what you said, and he's in prison now and I'm living in Emeryville."

"Good for you, Ms. Landry."

"So, how are you doing, and more importantly, what are you doing?" she asked a little playfully.

Our next writer, Torriano, a Berkeley High School student, who happens to be a new Beat intern, has given us a special treat, given his love for writing and author, Stephen King, as he wrote us a short story for us to enjoy. If y'all don't remember last week we published Paranoia Part 1 of this two-part sequel. So if you haven't read Part 1 borrow last weeks issue 14.05 from your Bunkie, cellmate, or yo' homey and read Part 1 first. It's a very entertaining story that will have you on the edge of your seat. Writing to us from Berkeley, CA, Torriano Delivers the second part of his thrilling story - "Paranoia" Part 2.

"Well, I'm...hey, wait, why are you asking?"

"I'm in San Francisco. I wanted to know if I could see you. I know it's late but -"

"You're in San Francisco? Why?"

"I told you, I wanted to see you."

"I know, but why?"

"Well -"

"Don't answer that question. I know exactly what you're doing," he said, cutting her off sharply.

"You do?" she asked, sounding astounded.

"Of course, I'm not blind, you're working with him!"

"What?"

"Don't play coy with me you stupid broad, I know that you're working for James Ellwood."

"Who?"

"James Ellwood. Look, I know that he is using you to get to me."

"I don't know what you're talking about Henry."

"That's not my name! My name is Brian Caine and James Ellwood is using you to get to me!"

"Why are you telling?"

"Nice try James but I won't fall for it! Brian Caine will not die today!"

"Henry, Brian, whoever you are, stop! You're starting to scare me..."

"I should be scaring you, because I'm not afraid of you, James Ellwood. You'll have to try harder than that to get to me. I'm a therapist, remember?"

Brian Caine slammed down the phone on the receiver, then threw it out his window.

That'll show him.

In her car Stella Landry listened to the drone of the dial tone and then began to cry. She wiped her tears and thought to herself I don't know what's wrong with him, but I'm going to find out.

Brian walked through his house and got the other house phone, then threw it out of the open bedroom window. The sound of plastic meeting pavement made Brian smile. Suddenly, he felt something in his pocket.

My cell phone, of course.

Brian looked at his cell phone to see who was calling him. There, in bold black backlit letters: James Ellwood. Brian went to look out of the window, then threw the cell phone out it. He watched as the expensive RAZR exploded into hundreds of pieces of plastic that flew in every direction.

He is not going to get to me, I will not allow it.

Although what Brian Caine didn't know, or at least didn't admit to himself, James Ellwood had gotten to him. He had infiltrated Brian's thoughts as soon as he walked into his office.

Chapter 7: The Dog, The Officer, and The Mailman

Brian woke up, not even remembering going to sleep last night on his bedroom floor. The time was now 10:30 and his doorbell rang. He got up still wearing the clothes from yesterday. He opened his front door to see a young white girl who may just be graduating high school. She was holding at least six leashes with a dog attached to each. The dogs all

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looked tame, well-trained, and healthy as well.

"What do you want?"

"Hi mister!" the girl said in a bouncy, cheery voice. "I'm looking to give homes to homeless dogs, so..."

"Look, little girl, I don't usually do these kinds of things, but I'll take the German Shepard you got there."

He fished into his pocket, hoping his wallet was still there and gave the girl a twenty.

"Here, take it."

"Thank you mister!"

"Now get off of my porch!"

He closed the door as the girl and her dogs walked off to another house. The German Shepard stared at him and he stared back.

"Sit."

The dog obeyed.

"Roll over."

He obeyed again.

"Play dead."

The dog rolled on its back and whined.

"Not bad, little Cujo."

He's very well trained, a little too well trained, he thought. Suddenly, something came back to Brian, something he said. (I have the tools, the skills, the smarts, the technology, drive, and perseverance.)

"The dog." (I could be right next to you and you wouldn't even know.)

The dog's wired. There's some sort of radio transmitter or something in his nose.

"So, you think you're smart, James. You think you can send your dog over here so you can listen to all the things I say, huh? Well, you thought wrong! Come here, little Cujo."

The dog followed Brian, who led it towards his bathroom. Brian told the dog to stay and then he ran some water in his bathtub.

"That's right, little Cujo, we're just gonna give you a nice little bath, now aren't we? Yes, that's because you're such a dirty little dog, isn't that right?"

Brian stopped running the water, then seized the dog by its collar and forced it into the water. It was a difficult task indeed, the dog put up a good struggle, but in the end, it succumbed to his will. Within twenty minutes the dog was dead.

"All clean," Brian said with a mischievous smile. That devilish grin didn't leave his face for quite some time.

Stella was talking to Officer Hutchinson from the San Francisco Police Department.

"So, let me get this straight, Ms. Landry, you talked to Brian Caine, and he said that you were working with James Ellwood to try and kill him?"

"Yes."

"And you're sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"I don't believe you."

"What! Why not?"

"Because your story makes no sense."

"What about it doesn't make sense?"

"It's just not possible."

"Look, I told you what I know, officer, and I want some answers."

"Ma'am, I'm sorry, but there is no way that your story can be true."

"Tell me, why not?"

"Because James Ellwood had been on death row for at least two years now."

"Wait, what?"

"Yes, the man you are referring to had no chances of ever

seeing the real world again, he was too crazy."

"Wait a minute, Officer Hutchinson. You said he was on death row. What happened to him?"

"He was sentenced to death by lethal injection, sweetheart. James Ellwood is dead."

"I-I-I don't believe it, but then what was Brian talking about?"

"Come down to pier 39. I have something to show you."

"Ok, officer."

"I'll be waiting."

Brian Caine sat by his tub, the dead dog in his lab, drinking a beer. A knock on his door made him jump. He shoved the dog off his lap and raced towards the front door. He swung the door open to see his mailman Lenny holding his mail in his hands.

"Hi Mr. Caine, got your mail for today."

"Come inside Lenny."

Lenny stepped inside and looked around.

"Nice place Caine."

"Thanks Lenny. Sit down on that couch over there."

Lenny sat down while Brian tossed him a beer.

"So, Lenny, how's it going man?"

"I'm doing okay, Brian."

"Ok, alright, you like your beer?"

"It's good, man."

"Yeah, savor it. You never know when it might just be your last."

"True man, you know, it's like they say: life is too short," Lenny said while laughing.

"Not mine."

"Huh?"

"Quit playing around Lenny. I know what evil you brought into my house."

"Huh?"

"I know that there are bombs in those letters you brought me."

"What!"

"You can't fool me!"

Brian sprang from the couch facing Lenny and began to smother him with a cushion from the couch. Lenny was strong and struck Brian very hard many times, but Brian didn't give in, but Lenny was eventually forced to. Brian removed the cushion and moved Lenny's lifeless body to his hallway closet. Brian then decided that he needed another beer, so he went to his kitchen refrigerator. He popped the top and tasted it. It tasted like victory and pain.

Chapter 8: The Basic Facts

"Ms. Landry, I wanted you to meet me here because I want to tell you some things you may not know about Mr. Brian Caine."

"Officer Hutchinson, what kind of information are you talking about?"

"I mean information regarding the man named James Ellwood."

"Let me have it then."

"As you wish Ms. Landry."

Officer Hutchinson opened a folder and began to read from one of the papers inside of it.

"Ms. Landry, I'm sure you remember the storm of October the thirteenth, the day made famous for the murders."

"The Friday the Thirteenth Massacre, at least what the headlines called it, right officer? How could anyone forget such a terrible day? 37 dead or fatally wounded, 12 officers and 44 civilians, horrible."

"The man responsible for that was James Ellwood, who

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was actually a cop. You see, before he went on his little rampage, he stopped by his house. There, he caught his wife, Katharyn Ellwood, having relations with her therapist. Guess who the therapist was, Ms. Landry?"

"Brian Caine?"

"Yup, he had been seeing her for almost a full year and she was calling herself Katharyn Jacobs. You can imagine you would've done the same thing if you were in his position though. Anyway, Ms. Landry, I'm going to tell you everything I know about these three people to the greatest extent of my knowledge."

Chapter 9: The Past

Brian Caine waited outside of the home waiting for his love to answer the door. She opened the door wearing a pink bathrobe with a pair of matching fuzzy slippers. She was smiling, flashing her perfect white teeth, and the scent of the angels themselves had been captured perfectly by her perfume.

"Come on in Brian," she said, leading him into the house and removing his jacket.

"Are you sure you don't mind me being in your house Katharyn?" he asked worriedly.

"Of course not. I'm just getting ready for bed. Go wait there for me while I dress."

Brian obediently went to the room and sat on the edge of her bed, waiting for her. Brian Caine was in love with this dark brunette haired goddess. He wanted to marry her, to be with her for the rest of his life, the rest of their lives. She came out of the bathroom wearing a red satin nightgown that was thin enough to see right through. She got on the bed and then took off his shirt, beginning to massage his back.

"What's the matter Brian, you're so tense."

"Katharyn, honestly, I'm just nervous. I mean, here we are, you know, and I just don't know what to think."

He turned to face her and her light caramel colored eyes gazed into his icy blue orbs, penetrating to his heart.

"Don't think then, act."

"I love you Katharyn."

She continued to stare at him, stunned by what he just said. Tears were welling up in her eyes. A flash of lighting went off and Katharyn screamed and jumped into Brian's lap.

"What's wrong Katharyn?"

"Nothing. I'm just a little scared of the storm. It's pretty intense."

"Don't worry, it's okay."

Brian couldn't help but smile and laugh, he thought the whole thing was too cute.

"Hold me Brian."

"I'll never leave you, Katharyn," he said as he did just so.

Then the two of them kissed, and once he tasted her lips he was sure it was a sensation he would never forget. Strawberries. Red-hot passion had now swollen inside both of them. They were interrupted by the opening of the bedroom door. In the doorway was a tall man wearing a black raincoat with the hood up, covering his face. There was a gun in the man's hand.

"James?" Katharyn said, amazed.

"Katharyn?" The man replied back through tears.

"Who?" asked Brian, confused.

The man looked at Brian, or at least Brian thought he did, and said, "I'm her husband, mister."

The man lifted the gun and shot Katharyn square in the middle of her forehead. She died without making any noise. He aimed at Brian who ducked while the bullet pierced

through the bedroom window. Brian leaped out of the broken window and narrowly escaped the third shot.

He ran all the way back to his house, the storm raging on, tears flowing as he ran.

Katharyn's dead body was still in bed, legs sprawled out in front of her, her dark brown hair flowing everywhere. She looked like an angel and smelled like one too. A tear rolled down James Ellwood's cheek as he draped a cover over his dead wife.

"Goodnight forever, my sleeping beauty."

He bent down and kissed her cold lifeless lips in sadness. He painfully turned and walked out of his front door, still holding the loaded gun.

Chapter 10: The Present

"Brian Caine went into a deep depression after that. Saw him again at the funeral. A lot of people wondered if he was ever gonna go back to work. You imagine having a job like his can only make things worse, you know."

"Yeah."

"Look, Ms. Landry, James Ellwood is dead, he requested death himself, so there is no way your story can be true."

"Officer, do you think that Brian Caine could have been as greatly affected as James Ellwood by Katharyn's death?"

"It may just be possible, miss."

"Love makes people crazy, officer. To quote the great Elvis Presley, 'I get so lonely I could die.'"

"Heartbreak Hotel," he replied.

She nodded her head in agreement, wondering if Brian was crazy.

Chapter 11: The Restaurant and the Ice

Brian Caine was now drunk. He was also hungry. He decided that he may as well go get something to eat, because it was hard to order pizza without a phone. He changed clothes and walked out to his car to drive down to a new restaurant that just opened up.

He looked corpse-like for the most part. There were heavy bags under his eyes and the shadows under his eyelids looked like marks from charcoal or army war paint. He ordered his food looking carefully so he didn't get anything with almonds in it, for he was terribly allergic to them. He thought his salad was good and then he had the feeling he had to use the bathroom. On his way to the bathroom he saw James Ellwood sitting in a booth drinking a martini. Then, he looked to the kitchen to see James Ellwood holding fresh almonds in his hand. Brian had it and sat in the largest stall, the stench of used toilet paper and cheap generic air freshener permeating his every breath.

(He's here.)

Brian leaned forward and he saw it. There were no feet on the floor but there was a shadow cast along the tile. He heard the click of the hammer being cocked back on the gun.

Brian pulled up his pants and bolted out of the stall, then dashed out of the bathroom door. He tried to stay calm as he walked back to his table.

"Brian Caine?" said a voice from behind him. The voice was familiar but he couldn't quite remember where he had heard it. It wasn't a threatening voice. Instead, it was friendly. Brian turned his head and immediately recognized the man.

"John Walters, is that you?"

"In the flesh."

John Walters was Brian's toughest client. He was depressed, suicidal, a drug addict, and a wife beater. He was also Brian's greatest accomplishment as a therapist. When he first started his career all his clients knew him by name. It wasn't until after the supposedly single Katharyn Jacobs

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entered and exited his life that he started to use names other than his. That is why John actually knew his name, unlike clients such as Stella Landry. He was one of the firsts.

"How are you John?"

"Doing good Brian. Me and Martha are fine. I'm still off the drugs, pills, and anti-depressants. I'm working on cutting down the alcohol too." Brian looked down for a moment and saw the shape that bulged from John's pocket. It was a gun.

(He's working with James.)

"So, he's got you too?"

"What's that Brian?"

"I see that gun in your pocket, John. You're working with James Ellwood, aren't you? He's trying to get you to take me out, isn't he?"

"What are you talking about Brian?"

"I won't go down that easy, no sir."

Brian got to his table and looked down at his salad. Someone had put almonds in it. Someone here knew he was allergic to almonds.

"Who did this to my salad!"

Everyone's head turned to face Brian now.

"So, James, I see you did your homework. Nice try but no cigar for you this time, dear friend."

Brian Caine then stormed out of the restaurant all the way back to the car.

It was in his car he had the craziest thought so far. Could it be possible that James Ellwood was watching him, tracking him somehow?

(I have the tools, the skills, the smarts, the technology, the drive and perseverance.)

(He could be tracking me through my body heat somehow.)

(I need ice, now.)

He pulled over to the nearest grocery store and grabbed the gun he always kept in his glove compartment. He walked through the doors and held up his gun to let off a shot in the air.

"Stay calm, I just want your ice, keep your money. The ice is all I've come for."

Nobody even tried to do anything to stop him, people just watched him carry out his bags of ice. He drove off back home, his entire backseat filled with ice.

He burst through his front door and tossed the bags of ice into his bathtub. Then he himself got into the tub when he was done with that task. He shifted the ice around a little and then placed bags on top of himself. The entire time there was a devilish grin on his face. He slept very peacefully that night.

Chapter 12: The Storm

Brian woke up with a headache. The ice around him had now melted and soaked through his clothes. He was indeed very cold.

(Look at me covered in melted ice. What has become of me?)

He already knew the answer to that question: James Ellwood. It was raining outside. A storm was coming. History was repeating itself in some ways. It would be settled tonight, in this house, it had to be. He knew James would come tonight to settle it all. Brian still had his gun in his pocket. He would need it when the time came. He grabbed four beers from his fridge and sat down on his couch. He cracked one open then took a sip. There was nothing left to do but wait.

Time moved quickly and the creeping darkness seemed to rapidly spread over the never-sleeping, never-tiring city of San Francisco. The storm had now escalated. The wind was screeching in agony as it pounded on his windows. The roar of the thunder sounded like the war cry of some ancient and

terrible beast. The rain came down hard and the lighting seemed like power surges from God himself. The scenery was perfect and almost poetic. Brian Caine still sat on his couch, his gun now in his lap, waiting. Just waiting.

The front door opened and there stood James Ellwood, standing in his black raincoat and smoking a cigarette.

"Brian Caine."

"James Ellwood."

"I think maybe it's time we finish this business. Write the final chapter in this book and then close it forever."

"Sorry to disappoint you, James, but Brian Caine does not die today," he said triumphantly.

"My dear Brian, all things must come to an end."

James advanced towards Brian while he rose from the couch and lifted the gun in his hand. He cocked back the hammer and then pulled the trigger. The blast of the gun seemed to silence the storm.

"It's finally over," Brian said, relaxing a little, his eyes closed.

When he opened his eyes he stared in horror, not believing what he saw.

James Ellwood was still advancing towards him. There was no blood, no wound, no bullet hole in his raincoat, nothing. It was as if the bullet just passed through him.

Brian fired three more times, moving backwards with every shot. He discovered that, to his horror, that the bullets were passing through him.

(What is he?)

"I am no ghost, Brian. In fact, I am quite real."

James then knocked Brian onto the floor and took his gun from him. He then picked Brian up and dragged him into his home office, then forced him to sit in his chair. He forced the gun into Brian's mouth, then took it back out.

"Say your last words and choose them wisely."

"Ok. I'm sorry things happened the way they happened. She never said she had a husband during sessions. She used the name Katharyn Jacobs. I never knew about you at all. I'd fallen for her. The love I had for her was one I never thought I could have for anyone. She invited me over to her house that night. We had been on many other dates before, though. I was completely unprepared for that night. I'm not sorry I met her. I still love her with all my heart. I'm sorry for you, James. I'm sorry for the monster that you have become, for the monster that I made you. Did you know I was thrust into depression after that night? It was because of you, James. You took her from me but that was my fault. I'm so used to helping people that when I destroyed you..."

He now looked into the eyes of the beast that he created himself. The hateful eyes saw through him, penetrating his soul.

"...I destroyed myself. I deserved to lose her, and now I deserve to die."

Brian Caine leaned back in his chair and felt the gun being forced into his mouth. He didn't bother closing his eyes. He already knew what was coming next. The couple of seconds, which would be known as his final moments stretched out for what seemed to be hours. He saw the woman who called herself Katharyn Jacobs, then he saw the sweet smile of Stella Landry. He saw the menacing face of James Ellwood and the dark shadow cast across his face from the hood of the black raincoat. Then, finally, he saw himself, in his own mirror. What he saw in the mirror was himself and nobody else. There was no one in the room with him. The hand on the trigger of the gun was his own.

The sound of the gun silenced the storm. For Brian Caine it silenced everything else. His cold dead finger slipped loose from the gun and fell into his lap. The gun, however, stayed

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in his mouth. Even though he was now dead, Brian Caine could feel a weight lift off his shoulders and he could truly rest in peace. The storm outside now began to calm down and the rain splashed against the windows while the wind seemed to whisper secrets untold, secrets of the past that no man should know. Some of those secrets are very similar to the human mind.

Epilogue

Brian Caine laid silently in his chair behind the desk of his home office. The blood, which once flooded out of the corners of his mouth had now dried on both of his cheeks. His icy blue eyes stared mindlessly off in the front of him resting on nothing in particular. His hands – and the rest of his body for that – were cold and dead, showing no signs of movement whatsoever.

Brian Caine is dead, and so is James Ellwood.

James Ellwood had a lot to do with Caine's death, but it wasn't he who killed him. The prints on the gun were Brian's. He was the only man who touched it that night. James Ellwood had been dead for at least two years. Also, everyone

knows that fun-loving ghosties and ghoulies don't exist, right? Any scientific study of the man named Brian Caine would point out it was all him, it was all in Brian's head.

A scientific study would say that the depression and mental trauma of the night of October the 13th coupled with the overall stress of being a therapist killed him. It would say his mind got so screwed up it would make him see or hear anything it wanted him to believe. It would say how his days and nights were haunted with thoughts of James Ellwood coming back for him. It would say that because he was so paranoid and afraid his mind actually acted out that scenario, leading to his eventual death.

All's well that ends well, right? Stella Landry now has a house of her own in which her loving boyfriend lives with her. As for Brian Caine, his grave rests next to Katharyn and James Ellwood.

Now don't think that what happened to Brian can't happen to anyone else. It can happen to you, your family, friends; it can even happen to me. It could be happening right now. Because, the truth is, we're all a little paranoid.

My Letter To The Beat

What's up Beat? This is Quintin from Fonky Town, Texas and I'm currently on Texas Death Row. I'm a 29-year-old brotha who's going on my 10th year of incarceration, and my 8th year on the row. I was given one of your issues, Volume 13.43, and after I read it, I asked if there was a Texas version of this (just an idea!)

Anyways, I'd be honored if you could do two things for me. Number one, could you put me on your mailing list? You can use the info that's outside of this letter. And number two, could you please publish this lil' piece for those young cats (young ladies & young men) who still have a chance at life and freedom still before it's totally taken away from them for real, 'cause just maybe by reading something from someone who's been there and done a few things, then maybe they'd think twice the next time around and take heed to things. When they touch down from this warning sign they're being blessed with at an early stage of the game.

Prison is no place for our youngstas to keep on going to because there's enough of us here already just so they can do better than we did. And even more important, "Death Row" sure ain't no place for nobody 'cause it's for real and trust that these folks are planning for keeps no ifs ands, or buts about it. So if they could really see and understand that "Hey we're still able to avoid this then maybe they'd want to try to at least see what the other side is about, 'cause they already know what one side will get them, you feel me?

Well Beat keep up the good work 'cause our youngstas need all the help our communities can provide from whatever angle available nowadays. Later.
 Respectfully,

Lastly, There's nothing I said in my piece that I haven't already been charged with. So, it can't hurt me anymore than it has already.

QUINTIN JONES

Our next writer just happened to stumble across our publication. He's a first time writer with a lot of advice to give to you readers out there. Quintin is one of those guys that you can say have been there and done it. And not to glorify anything but listen to what this man is saying. He had opportunities and chances but he didn't take them seriously and ended up catching some serious charges. Serious enough to be put on Death Row, Quintin has grown from this experience and we can clearly see it through his writing. Sending us these golden words of wisdom from Polunsky Unit on Death Row, in Livingston, Texas, Quintin gives us everything that he as to offer - wisdom at its finest!

Open Your Eyes n Take Heed

If a lot of us would take a second to open our eyes and take heed to certain thing. Then maybe a lot of us wouldn't be in our current situations. I used to think I was lucky, Beat, that I never really caught any major cases and got sent to TYC (Texas Youth Commission) or the Pen like a lot of my homies did or even worse, get crippled or murdered. Yet I did Juvie and probation stints (twice) or when we'd get jammed by the laws I'd be set free (in a sense) because I wasn't a noise talker. Because I was dirty in one way or another.

But now, as I sit here on Texas Death Row I realize that it wasn't really luck at all (take my word for it). It was God (or whomever one may believe in) steady giving me chances to get away from the lifestyle I was leading. Yet like those before me, I didn't pay it no mind, and went right back at it and charged it to the game, as I kept getting lucky over and over again.

Since I didn't take heed sooner, in one-year time span (19 to 20 years old). I caught four major cases, two dope cases and two capital murder cases in a three-month period. Now, I'm not complaining because we all have choices and I chose my lifestyle, so I accept to a point where I'm at because I chose drugs and gangs. But if I can help stop another youngsta from ending up on somebody's Death Row then I did something in life worthy.

So if you'd just take a second to open your eyes and take heed to those so called "lucky warning signs" then just maybe you can save yourself a life of "heartaches if I would've" before it's really too late for real. With that said, stay up, don't give up. Yet most importantly want something better out of life for yourself. But this time try it the right way. You feel me?

Lastly, just something simple to really think about while you've still got some sort of chance left in and outta life.

Y our life is worth more than what you think it's worth. Everybody has a positive purpose in life. It might take long to find out what it is, but it may make you rich one day. Once you learn, you live, because darkness soon comes to light. So what's yo' life worth?

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